

John 15: 9-17

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Risen Lord Jesus Christ

Today's Gospel text reminds me of the Sunday School song...love...love... love... that's what it's all about... 'cause God loves us... we love each other... Mother... Father... Sister... brother... Everyone sing and shout... because that's what it's all about...Love... love... love.

We learn this song in Sunday school as it it's a simple song... but it also has a very important message of God's love to each one of us... and others in our life.

God loves us so much... that He sent His Son into to this world to show us of this amazing love.

The word love appears in this gospel text 9 times.

Jesus said... "As the Father has loved me...So I have loved you... Abide in my love."

Then the word "abide" appears 3 times in the first two verses.

To abide in this love that Jesus speaks of... is for us to dwell in this love... and to remain in...

Jesus loves us... as God Loves Jesus....meaning the love in which we are to abide in... to dwell in... to remain in... is to live in...is a mutual dependence.

How do we live in this love that Jesus calls us to?

Not only calls us to... but commands us to?

It is not the *feeling* of love... we all know... and understand... no one can command our feelings....we can't even command our own.

But the love in our gospel ...is in an act... we are called to act accordingly.

But with that being said... emotions... or feelings... are not absent from this act of love.

This love is an action... it is a verb...

Love in action... it is a really difficult action sometimes... and we don't easily associate love... or friendship with a command.

But here we are being commanded to love our neighbors... not only love our neighbors.... But we hear... to lay one's life down for our neighbor... or in our words from John... "one's friends."

Jesus loved his disciples so much that he laid down his life for them.... In fact... Christ laid down his life for us all.... And there is no greater love than that.

Jesus' death on the cross.... Shows us how much God's love is for each... and every one of us....

It shows us how high... deep.... and wide God's love is... for us all!

This is God's amazing... and transformative love... that is shown in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus loved his disciples so much.... And was a friend to them... he did not call them servants.... But friends.

This is the only time in John's gospel Jesus calls the disciples... friends.

To be a friend of Jesus.... is not only to be loved by Jesus... but he chose these friends.... He chooses his followersand he has chosen us.

And as followers of Christ.... we too are called to this love that Christ commands...

We are then called to bear witness...being part of a community of believers... which creates and sustains us by God's love...

Because Christ abides in us... and we abide in his love... we receive a dwelling place... a resting place... in this amazing love.

The word abide actually means a dwelling place... a resting place... a dwelling is a home.

We are at home in Christ's love... and because Christ abides in us... and dwells in us... we too are commanded to love God... and our neighbor.

If we think about it... God cannot love the world without each one of us...

So how do we love God... and neighbor.

How are we to show the depth of God's love for others within... and outside... our church walls?

Here in small town America.... we have a strong sense of community... much like our church family...

Then how we are called to share the command of this love as a verb... in obedience to Gods call.

How are we invited to care for others in response to this?

We do acts of service... and kindness... because that is what we are called to do... we have a strong sense of love... but then out of that love for community ...and church how do we carry that out... in our acts of service to beyond our church walls.. and community... and to the world.

I ask you today to ponder how we care for others in this journey of life...

Does it require us to set aside certain beliefs...

Does it require us to set aside our political views...

Does it require us to set aside what we believe about another person...

Or how about being able to set aside prejudices that prevent friendships...

What would it be like to set aside certain beliefs.... Practices...or self-serving standards... in order for us to love like Jesus calls us to..

Especially to those who are different than us...

How do we open ourselves up.... How can we stretch ourselves....

Perhaps we need to intentionally listen to what someone is trying to tell us.... And not have a closed mind and heart...

How can we truly work to better ourselves.... to love neighbors... in the way that Jesus requires us to.

To truly love our neighbor as Jesus commands... is really... really.... hard.

But I tell you the church is committed to that love... not just the church as in our church here.... but the church as a whole.... Because this is God's church.

The love that God calls us to... must offer that loveopenly... and equally... to all people.

Regardless of color... age... social standings... Or fitting in with the right click.... Or add your own vice here..... that you perhaps need to work on...

We are not only called to love our neighbor as an action.... we are called to bear fruit of this action.... We need to have the kind of love that makes you want to bear that fruit...

Jesus loves us... as God loved Jesus... it is a mirrored image... and what does this mirrored image of Christ tell us...

One commentary said... “Jesus tells us we can do it”... because... Jesus walked the earth to show us the way....“You can do this!!”

After all... if a commentary says it... It has to be true. (😊)

We need to discern our thoughts... words... and actions... we need to think through our intentions...

Stop... pause... and reflectwhat loving God in this world looks like... and then we need to mirror those actions.

I am not going to lie... I am as broken as the next person... and this is a really hard thing to do.

But we can pray... and ask God for guidance... we can be intentional about what we do...

I know at times we all can get caught up in our own little world... but then we can ask God to guide us.... And help us move on from our poor behavior.

We are to remember we are to have a servant’s heart... we have a friend in Jesus... and the power to accomplish this love.... is an action... not a feeling... and it comes from the abiding relationship we have with Christ.

This is enabled through the Holy Spirit... who lives and dwells...abides with in us.

We can Pray... pray for your heart to be changed... through prayer we have a mutual abiding relationship with God...

God can and will renew our spirit with the right spirit... Prayer can change lives.

Let us remember ...Love is an important part of our lives... loving God... loving neighbor... it models Christ like behavior... out into our families... church... community... and beyond.

We are to set examples of what it is to mirror the love of Christ... and behave in a Christ like mannerbeing Jesus' hands and feet in this world.

This is how we show God's love.

Remember the word love is so important that we heard it nine times in a few short verses.

My dear friends... let us model that love... in our behavior... through our thoughts... words...and deeds.

Love your neighbor... love like Christ... Love like there is no tomorrow... so that we all may go forth and bear our fruit.

Amen.

