

Easter 6 5/9/21
John 15:9-17 B

“THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT, THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.”

Well, its Mother’s Day and Mother’s Day means that Mom is often remembered with flowers. And generally, those flowers are roses because, I suppose it could just be my opinion, but no flowers express love like roses.

Roses add color, beauty, and a very pleasing aroma to life. Even with their beauty and appeal, there is one part of the rose you have to watch out for – the thorns, thorns cut, wound, cause grief.

People are like roses. It is not good that we are alone, so God gives us pious spouses, good friends, and faithful neighbors. But, as good as our neighbors are for us, they all have their thorns.

This Sunday, we hear the words of Jesus, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” “Yes, yes” is our reaction; of course, I love my neighbor. Then, we remember our neighbor’s thorns and it’s not so easy to love them. Especially, that neighbor who harmed us. That neighbor who broke up my marriage. That neighbor who stole or vandalized my property. That neighbor who spread mean gossip about you. Those thorns cut, wound, and cause grief.

And sometimes, maybe more often than we like to admit, we are not all that loveable. We have thorns. We are prideful, selfish, self-centered. We have spoken mean, harsh, hurtful words to those who love us the most -- our parents, our children, our spouse. We have ignored our neighbor in their need so that we could buy more toys and have ease. We have kept a

record of wrongs, even of Mom, who may have failed our expectations. We have not always put the best construction on everything.

But, there is Good News for us. God did not want us to be His enemies and in continued conflict and strife with one another. He wanted us to love one another. So, He reconciled us to Himself and to one another in Jesus.

Even when we were not all that loveable, God loved us. He loves us so much that He sent His own Son to save us. Jesus was born of Mary to take on His human flesh and bone all that times we kept a record of wrongs against us; all the times we did not put the best construction on our neighbor's words and deeds; all our thoughts, words, and deeds that hurt our neighbor; and all of our sin. He gave His life on Calvary's cross, bearing our sin, which means that we are forgiven. All the sin that separated us from God and from one another is gone in the blood of Jesus. He died; but the 3rd day He rose again to bring us new life in Him, that we could love another as He has loved us.

III. "As the Father has love Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love...This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you, Jesus says (vv. 9, 12).

God sacrificed His greatest treasure, His only-begotten Son, for us. He put our need of forgiveness and salvation before the life of even His own Son. He didn't think of Himself, He thought of us. That's love. And, that's how Jesus commands us to love one another.

In the death of our sin, we have no ability to love as Jesus loves us. This morning, we have seen Brexyn become new in Christ in the new birth of water and the Word. By virtue of our baptism into Christ, we become new in Christ. In Holy Baptism, the Spirit crucifies our Old Adam, buries

our sin, raises us as a new creation, in Jesus Christ, giving us a whole new life in Him.

We learn from our Catechism:

How can water do such great things? “Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God’s word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, this is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit” (*Small Catechism*, 24).

In Christ, we are able to love as Jesus loves us. Remember the 2 parts of the cross. The vertical beam reminds us that God has reached down in love to us. The horizontal reminds us that we are to reach out in love to our neighbors. As God reaches out in love to us, we reach out in love to our neighbor. “We love because He first loved us,” the Bible teaches us (1 Jn 4:19).

The words of Jesus in our lesson are part of what is called Jesus’ Farewell discourse. He is preparing His Church for the time after His ascension when He would no longer be bodily present with them. They will live in a world which will hate them as it hated Him. But, even though He has ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, He will continue His work through those who branches grafted into Himself, the True, Vine.

Living in this valley of the darkness of sin and bearing fruit in service to our neighbor, we live as Jesus Christ did; we love as Christ first loved us, as John teaches us our Epistle,

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments” (1 Jn 5:1-2).

In the Christian life, the 10 Commandments teach use how to love

one another as Christ has loved us. You know my illustration, right? Just as the headlights guide your car in the darkness, showing you where or where not to drive, so the 10 Commandment guide us in loving God and our neighbor; showing us how to love God and neighbor. We are patient. We are kind. We are not envious. We do not boast. We are not rude. We do not put our wants first. We are not easily angered. We keep no record of wrongs. We do not delight in evil.

We are kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. We bear one another's burdens. We rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. As far as it depends on us, we live at peace with all men.

On Mother's Day, think of the unconditional love our mothers gave us. Our moms got up in the middle of the night – no matter how tired they were – to soothe us, they wiped away our tears and our hurts, they loved us even when we were not all that loveable. How true are the words of Luther: "God, parents, and teachers can never be sufficiently thanked and repaid" (*The Book of Concord*, 383).

Historically, this Sunday, the Sunday before the Ascension, is known as Rogate Sunday, Prayer Sunday. "Rogate" means, "Ask," "whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you," Jesus says (Jn 16:23). Perhaps, the best way we can show our love for one another by praying for one another, thanking and giving glory to God for all the spiritual and bodily blessings He has given and continues to give for our and our neighbor's welfare.

To love as Christ has loved us, we must be new in Christ. Daily, we must return to our baptism to put to death the desires of our flesh. Daily, we must be in the Word of God. We must come to the Lord's Table to be

fed His Body and Blood, for it is through these means of grace that we remain in the love of Jesus, that we may love as Jesus has loved us.