

Mutual Love

John 15:9-17

The Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 10, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The Father loves the Son. The Father shows that He loves the Son by giving the Son everything that the Son requests. So the Son asks the Father to raise Lazarus from the dead. The Father grants this request and the Son raises Lazarus from the dead. The Son loves His disciples. Therefore if the disciples request something from the Son, the Son will give it to them. The Son tells the disciples to remain in His love. One of the ways that you remain in the love of Jesus is by requesting those things which you need and He will give them to you. He will give them to you because He loves you. When He gives them to you, you will remain in His love.

It is not a one way street. Remaining in the love of Jesus is not simply requesting whatever you want and He gives it to you. It is that, but it is not only that. It is also keeping the commandments of Jesus. If you remain in the love of Jesus, you will keep His commandments. If you do not remain in the love of Jesus, you will not keep His commandments. If you love Jesus, you will do what He says. This is not hard. If you do not love Jesus, you will not do what He says. You will not care. You will not love. So remaining in the love of Jesus is not simply asking Him for things and He does them for you. It is also doing what He says. It is keeping His commandments.

The purpose of Him answering your prayers and you keeping His commandments is that your joy may be complete. If the Son did not answer your prayers, your joy would not be complete. Think of the times when the Son has answered your prayers. Your joy was complete. Think of the times when you did not pray. Your joy was not complete. And if it never occurs to you to pray, then your joy is not complete and you do not realize just how incomplete your joy is. The only way for joy to be complete is for the Son to give you what you ask.

The purpose of keeping His commandments is that your joy may be complete. Your joy is not complete if you do not keep His commandments. There are many who have pierced themselves with many griefs because they have not kept the commandments of Jesus. Think of how much better your life would have been if you had only kept the commandments of Jesus. Young people, make no mistake, your joy will not be complete unless you keep the commandments of Jesus. You may think that you can have complete joy even if you do not keep the commandments of Jesus. Such an attitude suggests that you do not believe that the Son came from the Father. In other words such an attitude suggests that the Son does not know what He is talking about when in reality the Father and the Son know exactly what they are talking about because they made you. If you do not keep the commandments of Jesus, your joy will not be complete. You may think that your joy will be complete, but it will not be complete.

So when you keep the commandments of Jesus and when Jesus grants your requests, your joy is complete. It is not merely when Jesus grants your request that your joy is complete. You must keep the commandments of Jesus as well. It is not merely when you keep the commandments of Jesus that your joy is complete. The Pharisees among us do that much. It is when Jesus also grants your requests that your joy is complete.

Love is mutual. It goes both ways. You love Jesus by keeping His commandments. He loves you by granting your requests. It is not one or the other. It is both. This is how you remain in His love.

Now, if we are going to remain in the love of Jesus at least in part by keeping His commandments. What are His commandments? What are we supposed to do? Well, Jesus could give you

a whole long list of things. In fact Jesus does give you a whole long list of things. Just read through the Scriptures and you will find plenty to do. He summarizes His commandments in this way: Love one another.

When He says love one another He is talking about His disciples loving one another. In other words, Jesus is talking about disciples loving other disciples. Applied to our context Jesus is talking about the members of the congregation loving the other members of the congregation. Look at the people sitting around you on the pews. Those are the people whom the Son is commanding you to love. That is His commandments. If you keep His commandments, you remain in His love. If you do not love the people around you in the pews, then you do not love the Son. You do not remain in His love.

I use the pews only by way of illustration. In reality the congregation keeps a roster of all of the people who are members of the congregation. People become members of the congregation, either by being baptized here, or by declaring their fellowship with the congregation, or by declaring their membership transferred here from another congregation with whom we are already in fellowship. That roster is maintained on a day to day basis. Occasionally we publish it in the congregation's directory. That is the list of names for which the Son issues His command. Love those people. That is what He means when He says, "Love one another." He is talking about the congregation of the disciples loving one another.

Now, how do we love one another?

Well, you love one another in the same way that the Son has loved you. How did the Son love you? He laid down His life for you. Greater love has no one than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends. Therefore greater love has no one for you than the Son because the Son laid down His life for you. But if that is the case, then that is how we love one another. The members of the congregation love one another by laying down their lives for one another.

In an ancient context this was a little easier to understand than in a contemporary one. In the ancient world there was persecution against Christian congregations. There were authorities of one form or another from time to time who wanted to stamp out Christianity. It was possible for such authorities to capture or arrest an individual member of the congregation and try to coerce out of him where the congregation met so that all of the members of the congregation could be arrested and under certain circumstances put to death. In such a situation the individual member of the congregation who was arrested could lay down his life for his fellow disciples by simply refusing to divulge where the congregation was meeting. If the authorities put him to death for such refusal, he would have laid down his life for his fellow disciples. In the example I am giving such a disciple would lay down his life knowing that it was entirely possible that the rest of the congregation would not even realize that he had done so. He would love them without them realizing or even ever finding out that he loved them. He would love them without glory or credit.

In our contemporary context we do not face persecution of this kind. First of all, we may thank our Father in heaven for the United States in which such freedom exists. On the other hand we are not exempt from the command of Jesus to love one another. You must now think about the commandment of Jesus to love one another beyond dramatic situations in which members of the congregation may lay down their lives for each other. Whatever you wind up doing for one another it is going to be a sacrifice. When the Son laid down His life for you, it was a sacrifice for you. That is to say that the Son would have rather have kept His life and not laid it down, but because of our situation with the Father it was necessary for Him to lay down His life for us in order to save us. By doing so, the Son demonstrated His

love for us. Therefore you are not slaves. You are His friends. You are His friends because He loved you. He laid down His life for you.

That means that whatever you do for each other is something that will be a sacrifice for you. When you show love for each other you will give up things for each other that you would really rather keep. Typically in our day and age it is money or some equivalent of money. And as was observed during Lent this year, money is life. It is what we use to live. Without money in our society, we die. If a person has a terminal disease he must have the money to pay for the treatments that will cure him or he will die. Money is life for that person. Therefore if such a person gives away the money that they have for the sake of another, they are giving their life away. And since you never know when you are going to need your money, any time you give money to a fellow disciple you are giving your life away. You are laying down your life for them. That fulfills the commandment of Jesus. You will never do it the way that He did. No one can. But you may participate in His great love who gave everything away, but giving to your fellow disciples.

You then participate in the love of Jesus. This also means that the members of the congregation are also going to give to you in your time of need. Since we receive the gifts that the Son gives us when we pray to Him when we participate in His love in this fashion we also receive the gifts that His disciples give to us. By receiving the gifts that our fellow members of the congregation give to us we also participate in the love of Jesus. Do not reject the gifts from the fellow members of the congregation for by doing so you are rejecting what the Son Himself is giving to you in answer to your prayers and in the mutual love of the congregation of the disciples.

Doesn't that mean that we earn the love of Jesus? If we have to keep the commandments of Jesus in order to remain in His love, doesn't that mean that unless we keep the commandments of Jesus, we do not remain in His love? If that is case, isn't it also true that we therefore earn the love of Jesus? After all to remain in His love we have to keep the commandments of the Son.

Well, that would be logical, but the answer is no. You did not choose Jesus. Jesus has chosen you. In a land where Christianity defines itself incorrectly as the action of the individual's will, let me say that again. You did not choose Jesus. Jesus chose you. He appointed you to go and bear fruit. You did not appoint yourself to go and bear fruit. Keep in mind that apart from Him you can do nothing.

That means that if you choose to love the fellow members of the congregation no matter how much you love them you cannot earn the love of Jesus. He must bestow His love upon you first and then you will go and love the fellow members of the congregation.

Besides if you loved the fellow members of the congregation in order to earn the love of the Son, then you would always be using the fellow members of the congregation in order to earn the love of the Son. If you are using the fellow members of the congregation in order to earn the love of the Son, then you are using the fellow members of the congregation for your own ends. That means that you are not really loving the fellow members of the congregation. You are really loving yourself. So you cannot love the fellow members of the congregation unless Jesus loves you first. Jesus does love you first. He has the greatest love of all for you. He laid down His life for you. It is because that He laid down His life for you, that you lay down your lives for each other.

Now how do we know as a congregation that the Son has chosen us? We know this because the Son has made known to us everything that He has heard from the Father. The fact that the Son has revealed to you what the Father has revealed to Him is the sign that the Son has chosen you. It is the sign that He loves you. It is the sign that He died for you and that all of the blessings of salvation that come

from His death are for you. The Son reveals what the Father has told Him when the Son speaks to us. He speaks to us in His word. That is how anyone speaks to anyone else, in their word. It is no different for the Son. Since the Son has given you His word the Son has revealed to you what the Father has told Him. That means that you are the friends of the Son. You are not His slaves. If you are friends of the Son, He loves you. He chose you.

For what purpose did He chose you? He chose you to go and bear fruit, fruit that would remain. What is the fruit that Jesus is talking about in John, chapter 15? Do you remember this from last Sunday? The fruit that Jesus is talking about is prayer. That is why He says that He appointed you to go and bear fruit and fruit that would remain so that whatever you ask the Father in His name, the Father will give it to you. Why does the Father do this? Because the Father loves you.

And then our Lord reminds you once more just at the end that love is mutual. His commandment is that you love one another.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.