

True Love

The gospel lesson for this coming Sunday (Sixth Sunday of Easter) is John 15:9-17). This is a continuation of last week's gospel of John 15:1-8 (I am the vine). What the people around Jesus were about to do to him makes this passage all the more remarkable. Judas was on his way to betray him. The other disciples were about to abandon him. Within hours, Gentiles and Jews each would play a part in unjustly arresting, abusing, and murdering him as a criminal.

The Greek word for love in this text means a love that acts without any expected return. It is a love that is defined and demonstrated by God. It is self-giving for the unworthy. God's love comes from him and is demonstrated on the cross. It is a creative love, evoking in his followers the same kind of unselfish, sacrificial love. Elements of such love are steadfastness, obedience, friendship, productivity, and prayer.

Now Jesus gives a command: *"Remain in My very own love."* This means the love which Christ has for us, not the love we have for Him. His love for us is a fact, just don't abandon it. This command is not a power trip on the part of Jesus. It is because Jesus wants what is best for our spiritual welfare. The way to do this is to use God's Word and Sacraments to continue to grow in our faith life.

There are a number of comforting rewards that are mentioned in this text:

- *"Your joy may be full"* (Verse 11). The Christian way is never dreary, for Jesus desires his disciples' joy to be complete. It means to be fully supplied; perfect. Christ has done it all, there is nothing for us to do but respond. This could be compared to a cup that is filled to overflowing.
- *"I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you"* (verse 15). This is nothing less than the life-giving and life-saving Word.
- *"I chose you"* (verse 16). I find this incredibly comforting because it is all God's work and not mine. Left to my own devices, I might well have gotten it wrong and missed the gift of being called one of God's children.
- *"You should go and bear fruit"* (verse 16). At first glance this could come of Law. But, this is not a "have to" but a "get to." It is a great privilege to do something for Christ and my fellow human beings.
- *"so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you"* (verse 16). Through faith in Jesus we have access to the Father in Jesus name. That means that we can ask for whatever would be God pleasing and to the benefit to our neighbor.

Prayer: Thank you Lord Jesus for the love you have for me and the whole world by your suffering, death and resurrection. Thank you for filling me with your love so that my joy is complete. Help me to generously share that love with all whose lives I touch. Amen