

Title: Love Makes the World Go 'Round

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, Jesus reflected your love so that the world would know Jesus; help us to reflect Jesus' love and so abide in him, you, and the Holy Spirit, and thereby transform the world into your kingdom, we ask Jesus' name. Amen.

Some people choose to be a caregiver. Some people have the job thrust on them. And for some people it both a choice and no choice. When I was a hospice chaplain, I saw all three examples.

One of these examples was of an estranged daughter who returned home to care for her mother who was on hospice service. The mother was grateful for the help and care and they seemed reconciled. The daughter gave all she had to care for her mother. She had to leave her job and home to do this.

Though the patient reconciled with her daughter, the other family members were not so forgiving. She did some things that brought shame to the family. The daughter's siblings were less than kind to the caregiver. It was bad enough that the caregiving daughter had to leave the house when another sibling visited their mother. Even then, the caregiver complained that her siblings did not visit their mother often enough.

Eventually, grandchildren could visit without the caregiver leaving. On one occasion, another daughter visited while the caregiver stayed in the home.

The mother and grandmother of this family provoked a family crisis with her impending death. The one family member that stepped up was the black sheep. She gave up her life for another, out of love. She did complain, but she never wavered. She did not ask for permission. She just showed up.

Sometimes love is expressed by just showing up. Sometimes love is expressed by giving one's self to another. Sometimes love is expressed in working together for a common cause. Expressing love always bears fruit.

Today's gospel continues where last week's reading left off. To summarize last week: the disciples are to abide as branches to Jesus' vine and that the

disciples are to bear much fruit. Now Jesus shares the engine that causes the vine and branches metaphor to work.

That engine is love. Jesus states several concepts around what love means to him. So, I did a diagram to see Jesus' words with arrows and lines showing the relationships. The players are three: God, Jesus, and the disciples. I will spare you the PowerPoint.

There is a direct relationship between Jesus' commands or commandments and love. Obeying Jesus is only done through love. The source of love is God. The disciples know God's love by seeing Jesus' love for them. The outcome of love is joy. Practicing love bears fruit. Jesus implies that fruit is good works, which can only be accomplished with love.

“If we are to be authentic disciples . . . , we have to understand what Jesus means when he calls us to love one another. Our Middle Eastern ancestors in the faith used the word love differently than we do in the West. In the Bible, love has a deeper meaning than just the emotional feelings that we normally attach to the word.

“Jesus uses ‘love’ to convey a concept of attachment and bonding to a particular group of people, most notably the members of a family. To love one another is to stay connected with the others in the group, and to do whatever it takes to maintain the bond that expresses that unity.” (Kevin Saunders)

The love that God and Jesus have for one another is the same love that Jesus has for the disciples. Jesus is addressing his disciples at the Last Supper. However, Jesus' disciples are not limited to that group at that time. All followers of Jesus in every time, including ours, are Jesus' disciples.

Jesus invites the disciples to abide in his love. Then comes the catch. If the disciples keep Jesus' commandments, they will abide in Jesus' love. Jesus doesn't say that they are to keep Moses' commandments. They and we are to keep Jesus' commandments. Jesus gives them and us the example of God's commandments. Jesus lived God's commandments and so Jesus abides in God's love. Jesus and God, being one, have the same commandments.

Jesus is telling his disciples this so that Jesus' joy may be with them. The ironic part of this is that after saying this, Jesus is hours away from the cross. Jesus is talking of joy just before being tortured and killed. The evil of the world cannot temper Jesus' joy. By having Jesus' joy, the disciples' joy is complete. There is no greater joy than abiding in Jesus.

So, what are Jesus' commandments? It is rather simple. There are 613 laws of Moses. There are not just the Ten Commandments. Jesus says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12) It is easy to remember. It is very simple. But it is also so very hard. Our neighbor is anyone near us, anyone who can contact us. We do not get to pick and choose. Just as Jesus loves us unconditionally, we are to love our neighbor unconditionally.

What kind of thing would be an example of unconditional love? The greatest love is to die for one's friends. We consider ourselves friends of Jesus. Quakers call themselves friends, because they are friends of Jesus. They choose to identify themselves that way. We are all friends of Jesus. We are all recipients of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus did that out of love.

We qualify as friends of Jesus if we do what Jesus commands us. We are to love one another. It is out of love that we receive Jesus' gift of friendship.

Jesus makes the distinction between being a friend and being servant or slave. A servant or slave does not know the master's or mistress' plans or actions. The disciples are no longer servants. They are friends because Jesus has told them everything. "Christians are often so busy being God's servants, 'working for Jesus,' that we forget he wants us to be his friends, to love him and be loved by him."¹

The disciples did not volunteer to join Jesus. Jesus chose them. Jesus has chosen us. Jesus came for the whole world. But the world has not all gone to Jesus. We are to gather the world for Jesus. Jesus appointed us to bear much fruit. Being commissioned by God we have the tools we need to bear fruit

¹ Burrige, R. A. (2001). [Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year B](#). In R. E. Van Harn (Ed.), *The lectionary commentary: theological exegesis for Sunday's texts, volume three* (p. 568). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

from God, in Jesus' name. No one person can do this. We can only do this when we have love for one another.

It is said the love makes the world go 'round. Human beings cannot thrive without love. There have been some ugly studies about that, but we cannot function without love. Yet we do things that are not loving. There are times when satisfying our other needs makes our brains cast love aside for personal gain or satisfaction.

Here is a utopia where love is the only ideal. There is no government because everyone is treated fairly and without physical, emotional, or spiritual injury. This is place where laws are unnecessary. So, there is no head of a government. There are no legislatures. There are no laws, save the law of love. There are no courts. And maybe, even better, there are no lawyers.

There is enough food for everyone. There are no homeless, because everyone gives and receives hospitality. The economy is largely a barter economy. No one hoards. When someone gets sick, they are cared for by those with those skills, bearing fruit. This means there is no insurance.

This is a world that Jesus provoked. In other gospels, Jesus calls this utopia, the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. Genesis calls this utopia Eden. God wants us back in Eden. Jesus pointed the way we can get back. Yet for 2,000 years, we haven't made it. We have inched our way closer as life is far less violent than it was in Jesus' time. We still have a long way to go.

“Jesus commands us to love one another. This is a call to action. We have to work to stay connected to each other. This is our witness to the world outside the church. When the world sees how we love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ they will be drawn to join the family of faith.”
(Kevin Saunders)

Text: **John 15:9–17** (NRSV)

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's

commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants^d any longer, because the servant^e does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. ²

^d Gk *slaves*#

^e Gk *slave*

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*](#). (1989). (Jn 15:9–17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.