

Sermon for The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Year B

May 6, 2018

The Rev. Paul LeClair

Acts 10: 44-48 Psalm 98 1 John 5:1-6 John 15:9-17

Shed your light on us, O God, to see the wonder of resurrection,
And give us a sense of the miracle of new life in ourselves

- The Rev. Renee Miller, Walk and Be Well

During the season of Lent, we reminded ourselves each Sunday of the Ten Commandments and of Jesus summary of the Law in the two great commandments to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Today, the sixth Sunday of the Easter season, we heard Jesus shedding more light on the subject of commandments. Jesus commanded his disciples to “love one another as I have loved you.” What do you suppose he could have meant by this commandment? And how can we possibly obey it?

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Well, to better understand, let's first look at **how** Jesus loved. Jesus told his disciples, “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends.”

Friends see each other as equals, a servant and a master do not. So, one way we can love, as Jesus loved, is by rejecting society's efforts to convince us that we are superior to others because of our skin color, our ethnic heritage, or other artificial concepts.

We also need to prevent the world of advertising from influencing us by telling us that we are inferior if we don't buy certain products or fail to meet contrived standards of physical attributes.

Now, let's also consider **who** Jesus loved.

Jesus loved (and forgave) his tormentors

As well as the criminal next to him as he was being murdered on the cross.

He loved a determined Syro-Phoenician woman, a powerful Roman Centurion,

5,000 people who were hungry for truth and in need of food,

a guilt-ridden woman at the well, a noisy leper, and a persistent blind man.

They were all people who were seen as being different, or as enemies;

as foreigners, or as societal rejects.

Even the disciples themselves were people who lived in the margins of society.

Among them were crude fishermen, a tax collector, and a political zealot.

One initially looked down his nose at Jesus because of where he was from,

and another was skeptical and filled with doubts.



A follower of Jesus, whom we know from our own lifetimes,

is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

This quote from Dr. King, is an example of how he tried to shed light

on how we can love as Jesus loved.

“An individual has not started living

until he can **rise above** the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns

to the broader concerns of **all** humanity.”

This reminds me of a story of a rabbi, who gathered his students together just before dawn and asked them a question:

"How does one know the exact moment when night has ended and morning has begun?"

The first student replied, "When I can look out and see the point where my farm field ends and my neighbor's begins, that is when morning has begun."

A second student answered, "When I can look out and can make out the shape of my neighbor's house from my own, that's when morning begins."

The rabbi smiled but shook his head indicating these answers were not correct.

The last student offered, "When I can look out in my field and can tell the difference between a horse and cow, then morning has arrived."

At this point, the rabbi spoke, "Each of you is mistaken because you have all focused on division, and how you know morning has come when you are able to divide and separate one thing from another.

I tell you that at the very moment when you can look at every man and woman regardless of their race, creed, or color and see them as your brother or sister, that is when the night has ended and morning has begun."



A few weeks ago, some members of St. Patrick's were invited to have some afternoon snacks at the home of the Kanoush family. They're the Syrian refugees that received many of the items that our parish members donated to the "room boxes" during the season of Advent. Some folks from St. Pat's have also been able to help the Kanoush family with transportation, job searching, and in a number of other ways.

At our visit with them, they proudly showed us their “green cards” which they were able to obtain with our assistance.

Their son sang for us and played some tunes on a small keyboard that someone had given him.

The family explained their customs and practices during Ramadan, and they told us about some of the horrific experiences they that they’ve endured since being forced from their home in Damascus.

In spite of the many tragedies they’ve lived through, we could see joy in their eyes; the love in their hearts they have for each other; and the gratitude they have for the unconditional generosity that St. Patrick’s has shown them.

I came home from that visit believing that God’s light pierced the darkness of our dark and broken world that day and revealed to us a glimpse of the Kingdom of God.



Remember those followers of Jesus, who started as bumbling band of confused outcasts and misfits?

Their relationship with Jesus brought about change in their lives.

Because they were willing to step out in faith, and consider new viewpoints, they began see each other, and the world around them, in the light of Christ.

Then they spread that light, so others too, could experience God’s love through them.

In the weeks and months ahead of us, as we continue to discern as a parish, God’s individual calls to each and every one of us, let’s humble ourselves, to respect each other as equals, as children of God, who have each been endowed with individual gifts.

While these gifts may be different and unique, they all have value.

Let's also resist the temptation to think of ourselves, or of our personal ministries, as inferior to others simply because they're not all the same.

On this Rogation Sunday, we ask God's blessing on the newly planted crops, and we celebrate that the time has come for many of us to prepare our own flower beds and vegetable gardens.

Likewise, as we strive to love as Jesus loved, we may just discover that like those first disciples, we too can start anew to change, and to grow.

We can be empowered to shine God's light through our actions and example.

By being the hands of Christ; by serving the needs of others;

we **will be** loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, and minds, and strength;

and loving as Christ loved us.

Amen.

Sources:

The New Interpreters Study Bible, NRSV with Apocrypha, Abington Press, Nashville, 2003

Weekly Words of Wellness by Scott Stoner, The Living Compass Wellness Initiative, April 6, 2018