

## **“Showing Love”**

Liturgical Date: Easter 6 (A); This year this was Mothers Day.

Primary Text: St. John 14:15-21

Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. The primary text for today, the Sixth Sunday of Easter, is the Gospel Lesson from St. John Chapter 14. The title of the sermon is, “Showing Love”.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS US THE LOVE OF GOD AND WE SHOW OUR LOVE FOR GOD BY BEING OBEDIENT TO HIM.

As we near the end of the Easter season, the passage from John 14 that we heard a few minutes ago points us to two events that we celebrate in the Church right after Easter. This text is a “mini Pentecost” as Jesus promises to send the Holy Ghost to His people and points us to the work of the Holy Spirit. We will celebrate Pentecost in two weeks. These verses from the Bible are also yet more evidence of the Trinity as we see Jesus speaking, His and our relationship with the Father described, and as noted a moment ago, the Holy Ghost promised. In three weeks, we will observe Holy Trinity Sunday.

And, of course, today is a special day on our secular calendars. One that we can certainly celebrate in the Church today. Happy Mothers Day! Yes, we should be thankful for and honor our mothers every day-but it is nice to have a specific day where they get even more recognition for the special things that they do and special role they play in God’s plan. But truth be told, Mothers Day is a time when children are much more likely to do something special for their moms: buy her flowers, give her a card, take her to dinner or cook for her, let her take a nap uninterrupted-basically whatever makes Mom happy! The point here is that we

love our mothers. Therefore, we want to do things that make them happy and that they enjoy. And we don't forget the fact that our mothers loved us first. They loved us even before we were born. In thinking about some of these things, this helps us understand some of the points that God is teaching us in our Gospel lesson for today.

God loved us way before we loved Him. In fact, the Bible tells us in 1 John that we love because He first loved us. The Bible from beginning to end shows God's love for His creation, His people. We can start with that. He created us. He gave us life. Time and time again, despite their disobedience, God delivered the people of Israel in the Old Testament. Then He came as a human being, Jesus. This Jesus suffered and died for His people. He paid the fine that none of us could pay. He rose from the dead and promises us that we too will rise from the dead. Finally, the Father promises to send Jesus again to the earth to once and for all end death and that His people may live in paradise with Him. That is some serious love.

And how do we show our love for God? Verse 15, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"*, and then verse 21, *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."* Wait a second pastor, we're Lutherans and we know that we are saved by grace. We can't just keep a bunch of rules (which we can't perfectly keep anyway) and earn our salvation. Agreed. I obviously agree with that. That is what the Bible teaches us. At the same time we should never forget that there are three functions of the Law of God. The Law serves as a curb on bad behavior, keeping order in society. Secondly, the Law is the mirror that shows us that we are sinners in need of a Savior. And then there is that third function, the Law as a rule or guide. It shows us how we are to live as Christians.

Even as Lutherans, we are not to forget that third use. Grace is not a license for us to do whatever we please. The freedom of the Gospel is not a freedom to practice lawlessness.

I said our mothers love us even before we loved them. And I also said that God loves us even before we love Him. So clearly this text is not telling us we do nice things for God and others and then we somehow earn His love. As if we could do such a thing anyway. We know that we are sinners, that God's standard is perfection, and the only way we can meet that standard is in Jesus.

None of that is in question and that is really not the point this text or sermon is making. The point being made is that if we truly love God, then we will keep His Commandments. And this is more than a list of "dos and don'ts". It is pertaining to the whole Word of God, trusting Him, following all that He has commanded, including that we are to repent and trust in Jesus as our Savior. What Jesus is telling us in verses 15 and 21 is that by keeping His Commandments is how we show that we love God. It is not *how* we get God to love us or somehow create love for God ourselves, but it is the *evidence* that we do in fact love Him. Being obedient to God, loving Him and others, is our response to the Gospel.

It is more than just lip service. Because our actions will reveal what is truly in our hearts. As I said earlier, we show our love to our mothers by doing nice things for them-today and on other days. But consider this scenario, it is a sad one, but ponder it. It can happen with younger children, but often with children as grow into adults. A child says they love their mother. However, they speak ill of their mother to other people every chance they get. They verbally abuse and belittle their mother to her face. They discount her direction and advice every

time. They take advantage of everything that she has provided for them. They even steal from their mother. And then her birthday or Mothers Day comes around and they never even call. They never give her any gifts. You know, that might cramp their style or cost them money. It all about them.

In thinking about this scenario, is it that the child's mother did not love them? No, that is not it. But would it be fair to question that the child in the scenario even loved their mother? Yes. Now, hopefully the child will come around one day and have true love for their mother and show it. But as of right now, there is no evidence that they really love their mother. Their actions have not caused them to not love their mother, but their actions *show* the lack of love that they have for her. And then we can tie this illustration into our relationship with God. If someone says they love God, but they never listen to nor respect God and His commandments, you would have to wonder. This is what Jesus is saying. If someone truly has love for Him, they will listen to what He has to say and follow Him. True faith always produces good fruit.

And the great news here is that we are not alone. Like a good mother would never abandon her children nor leave them without any guidance, our Father God doesn't do that either. Jesus says that as He prays to the Father, and they would send the third person of the Trinity to be with God's children: this is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit. As I stated earlier this text can be seen as a "mini Pentecost" as the promise is given. In fact, where the KJV says in verse 18, "*I will not leave you comfortless*", this can also be translated as He will not leave us as "orphans." God is there with us.

Jesus comforts us and is with us, and in verse 16 He says, "*he shall give you another Comforter*". The Greek word in the original text is *parakletos*, literally

one how appears on another's behalf. Some translations translate this as "helper" or "counselor". But this is not some type of God-psychologist that just listens to you and gives you advice. It is much better than that. He gives us comfort because God Himself indwells us, guides us, cleanses us from sin, and creates and sustains faith. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, God Himself as our Comforter.

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth. The Spirit inspired all of the writers of the Bible. Since the Holy Spirit is God, He is truth-incapable of lying. His Word is true. It is something that only God's children, Christians, can have. The world will not know Him. The world will even mock Him. But for the faithful, the Holy Spirit fills and indwells us, giving us the strength to do God's will.

He comes to us, Jesus told us that didn't He? Verse 18, *"I will come to you."* That the Holy Ghost enters the hearts of believers is both a blessed mystery and a glorious fact. We don't get to choose our mothers, or our earthly fathers for that matter. And we really don't choose our heavenly Father either, He choose us, He comes to us. Now it is true, as in my illustration earlier, that a child could grow up and sadly reject their mother and her love. It is also true that a person baptized and raised in the Church can grow up and reject their heavenly Father and His love. This grieves God greatly. But He doesn't give up on us. He holds out the offer of reconciliation and restoration of that relationship.

And this is what this relationship is. Communion with God. As Jesus said in verse 20, *"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."* God indwells us as He sends the Comforter to us. And by the power of the Spirit, we keep His Commandments. In this we show our love for Jesus. And like

our mothers God doesn't just want love one or two days a year. He desires that love and relationship each and every day of our lives.

As we close, note that Jesus tells us when this relationship comes to full fruition. In verse 20 speaks of "*At that day*". Jesus has told His Disciples many important things on that Thursday night right before He would be betrayed and die. He is telling them not to worry, even as He physically leaves them, He is not leaving them alone. Of course, Jesus would ascend to the right hand of the father-which the Church remembers this coming Thursday. But I would agree with the commentators who say this verse is also pointing to His resurrection. The Disciples will fear and mourn because they think Jesus has left them after He dies. But three days later they will get a very pleasant surprise! The resurrected Jesus will visit with them that first Easter night, very much alive and very much still having a body. Yes, He would physically ascend to be out of their physical presence again 40 days later. But He is still with them. God the Holy Spirit indwells us, and thus Jesus does too. He still comes to His people, with the Holy Spirit delivering Word and Sacrament. He shows His love to us. We, as we will today, gather around His table and observe the Holy Supper with Him really here! The resurrected Jesus is here with us, dwells with us, and gives us the promise of living with the Triune God forever.

Christ is Risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.