



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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May 29, 2011
6th Sunday of Easter
Sermon Text: [John 14:15-21](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 4:1-16](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 66](#)
Second Lesson: [1 John 3:13-18](#)
Gospel Lesson: [John 14:15-21](#)

Because We Love Jesus

We keep his commands
We are blessed with the Spirit
We are one with God

As a child, there are four words your parents probably say from time to time that either drove you nuts when you were a kid or are driving you nuts now. They tell you to do something and you say, "Why? Why can't my brother or sister do it?" What do they say? "Because I said so," right? That's the reason for everything in life when you're a kid growing up... "because I said so."

It's kind of frustrating when you're a kid, isn't it? Don't you have something better to offer than that mom or dad? "You're better at it than your brother or sister"...that's really what you want to hear, isn't it? "Only you can do it. They could never do it." You want to hear some stuff like that, but you're stuck with "because I said so." But when it really comes down to it, that's a valid reason, isn't it? Biblically it's a valid reason. God has told you to obey and honor your parents. So you should obey them and honor them without muttering like you probably do.

This morning our God comes and talks to us and gives us a reason that's much better than "because I said so." Even though God has said this, he gives us another reason why we do what we do, why we are what we are, and it all focuses on him and the gifts he has given us in Christ. He doesn't say "just because I said so," but because he sent Christ to us and has given us the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts. Now we can say "because we love Jesus." And that love for Jesus changes us. It shapes us and it makes us want to do some of the things that we are to do in life that maybe our sinful nature doesn't really want to do. Because we love Jesus, we want to listen to what he commands. We know that God has given us the Spirit and will continue to give us the Spirit. Because we love Jesus, there's a glorious truth that we often neglect...we are one with God. They're thoughts that are probably a lot higher and loftier than where we live in daily life. Even God's use of the word "love" is higher and loftier than how we use it.

Someone this morning already reminded me I love coconut cream pie, and I do, but that's a personal preference, right? You might not like coconut cream pie. You might for some unknown reason like some other kind of pie better. That's your choice. That's your personal preference. We use the word "love" at times just to mean "like." Then it really becomes all about me, right? This is what I love. This is what I like. It's really all

about me. I love the melody of the hymn we sang earlier. Or, I hate the melody of the hymn we sang earlier. Or, why do we have to sing a hymn that has 10 verses? It's all about me, right?

God's word of love isn't all about you. He uses the same word for love here that he uses to describe his love for us. His love for us just simply says, "I do this because I love you. I put you ahead of me." Whether or not we like or dislike something when it comes to this kind of agape love, we love God so much that we do what he has called us to do whether I like to or I don't like to because I am consumed by this love for my God. That's what he is talking about. Our love for him is so intense, it's so deep, it's so abiding, it's so burning that it sets aside all these things about "I don't want to, I don't like to" and all this other garbage where our sinful nature lives day after day after day. The sinful nature wants to say it's all about us and then we claim that's loving.

This is saying, "If you love me," and the love he is talking about is this love that loves like God loves, "If you love me and put me ahead of yourself, you'll obey what I command." He's given us every reason to love him and obey what he commands. He loved us and gave himself for us when we were filthy rotten sinners that had nothing loveable about us, nothing that we could offer to God and say "Okay, I gave you this, now you owe me something God." We can never say that to our God because he is so infinitely beyond us. Yet he loves us. It's inexplicable except God is love. That's what John says over and over in his letter, doesn't he? This is love...not that we love God, but that he loved us and gave himself for us. *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."* That's what John said to us this morning.

If we love God, we'll obey what he commands, and we do it without grumbling and without complaining. Because we have this love for God, it means that we also have this deep and abiding trust in him. This trust says that if God says to do it, he's smarter than I am and he loves me completely and perfectly and absolutely, so it's for my good that he says this to me. Our sinful nature says, "God tells you to do these things because God wants to take all the fun out of your life." Our sinful nature is an idiot and unfortunately our sinful nature often wins the battles. It convinces us that time spent with God is a waste of our time, or time spent with God is time that I won't have for something else. This is how foolish we are, and we listen to that sinful nature that lives in us.

Whereas the new self in us speaks up and says time spent with God is never a waste because time spent for God is honoring and thanking the God who has loved us. It isn't doing something for him that he needs from us, but as we do what he says, he blesses us and strengthens us and gives us a peace that we often say passes all understanding, but we don't stop and think what that means. A peace that the world can't give. A peace and a purpose for life that comes because we love God who first loved us. Now I want to live for him. I don't have to do these things. I want to. I don't do them perfectly, and neither do you, but we want to in our new self. If our new self isn't speaking up that often, it's for one reason. It's because we aren't spending

enough time with God. We aren't in his Word. We aren't close to him in Word and Sacrament and his Spirit can't live in us if we don't plug ourselves into where the power of the Holy Spirit comes from.

Jesus spoke these words when he was about to leave. It's Maundy Thursday. He's going to be gone. They are going to be terrified. They aren't going to know what to do. And he says, "Don't worry, I'm not going to leave you as orphans. I'm going to send another counselor." He had been their counselor. Now another one will come, the Holy Spirit, who would lead them into all truth and who would give them an understanding that they still at this point didn't have. Yes, the Spirit lived in them. They believed Jesus was the Messiah. But the Spirit would lead them into greater understanding. That would bring greater peace, a greater joy, and a greater contentment.

Jesus promises the Spirit. He kept that promise at Pentecost. Think about these guys on Pentecost. These are the guys that had been locked in a room because they were so scared. These are the guys that all ran away when Jesus was arrested. But these are the guys who, 50 days after his resurrection, stand in a crowd and publicly proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God and you folks killed him. Think of the courage that took. Read Acts 2 to get ready for Pentecost and look at how Peter, the fisherman who fished with his foot in his mouth most of his life, all of a sudden is quoting the Old Testament and weaving these passages throughout and showing that all of this had to be true. That came because the Spirit now was living in him and the Spirit opened his heart to understanding Scripture.

But you can't understand Scripture if you aren't in it, can you? The Spirit will open your heart so you will have a greater understanding and a greater peace and a greater contentment and a greater joy. But he isn't going to do it if you keep the book closed and just use it to save clippings and press leaves. He's waiting. He wants to live in you. God wants to pour out the Spirit on us through Word and through Sacrament and give us an understanding of the purpose of life that is not around us in the world.

You can watch so many movies and so many TV shows and read so many articles online or in the newspaper that characterize Christianity and show that they just don't have any understanding of what it's about at all. If you get your knowledge of Christianity from the History Channel, may God have mercy on your soul. That's why the good Lord gave you the Bible. Don't just listen to someone talking about it or modern day scholars that deny it's the Word of God talking about it. Read it yourself and let the Spirit work in you.

Our God is telling us some amazing things. Jesus said he is going to be gone. He wouldn't leave them as orphans. He would send the Spirit to them, but he would be gone. Then they would see him. He would die. He would rise again. Then he would be gone, but he wouldn't leave them as orphans. He would send the Spirit. The Spirit would lead them into all truth. Then they would realize something they, to this point, didn't know. The Father and Jesus are one, and they are in one another just like now Jesus and the Spirit would be in them, be in them through Word and Sacrament, and

strengthen them and guide them and teach them in ways that to this point they didn't have this understanding. Now all of a sudden they would understand like Jesus and the Father would be one, they would be one with the Father.

God lives in us through Word and Sacrament. Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit is what Paul says in his letters. Here it tells us that Jesus says he'll live in us. God lives in us when he gives us the gift of faith. The Spirit leads us to believe that Jesus is our Savior, the only answer that has taken away all of our sins. He leads us to this greater joy and this greater peace the closer we get to him. The more time we spend with Word and Sacrament, the more we see how God has a love that is amazing and it changes us in ways that we could never begin to imagine. I've seen it happen so often in people's lives. I've seen it in the people that spend time in the Word and I see how it changes them from where they were.

At times I also see Christians who have grown up with it all their lives and begin to just take it for granted, like someone said in Bible class this morning. We lose this awe factor at God's love for us in Christ. I think we are always in danger of doing that, aren't we? We just take for granted that God will love us and be with us and forgive us. We don't think about our sins and why God really shouldn't love us. We aren't amazed that he loves us in spite of who we are, and we just take it for granted and think, instead of this amazing love of God for us in Christ, what do I have to pack for the picnic tomorrow or wherever I'm going or whatever I'm doing. That's how we are. That's who we are. That's our sinful nature. If it doesn't amaze us that God loves us in spite of how often we can't stay focused on him, then we're missing the boat. Then we're missing the reason for our life.

We live and respond to God because he loved us first and because he has given us a love for him that changes us.