



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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May 13, 2012
6th Sunday of Easter
Sermon Text: [John 15:9-17](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Acts 9:36-42](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 98](#)
Second Lesson: [1 John 4:1-11](#)
Gospel Lesson: [John 15:9-17](#)

Remain In Jesus' Love
That your joy may be complete
That your fruit may last

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

In Christ, our risen and ruling Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

Love them or hate them, computers and the internet have some wonderful benefits, at least for some of us. It was just really nice this last week to all of a sudden have it dawn on me that today is Mother's Day and be able to get online and order something and have it sent to my mom and have her almost drop over dead because her son actually remembered Mother's Day one year. But the great thing, not only about ordering, is that you could sign up for reminders for in the future. So I signed up for reminders in the future. Now I'll look like I'm really a good kid from now on I suppose.

It's not that I don't love my mom; I love my mom dearly. It's just that I'm terrible at remembering stuff like this at times. I love my mom dearly for all the things that she's done for me. I suppose today even those people that had struggles with their mothers probably take the time, at least many of them, to call and say to mom, "I love you, and I always will love you." That's just the way we are.

As we gather today on Mother's Day, we are reminded about love by our Lord and Savior. He reminds us not only to remain in our mother's love, but he really looks us in the eye and says "Remain in my love." These words that he speaks to us this morning from the Gospel follow right after what we talked about last week. Last week we talked about remain in Christ as the vine to the branch, pruned and fruitful. Today Jesus continues talking in that Upper Room on Maundy Thursday. He narrows it down to focusing on love. Just like we remain in a mother's love, remain in Christ's love. He tells us what it means and what it will do for us. It's really amazing when you stop and think about what Jesus is telling us on this day.

Stop and think about when he spoke these words and the things he was saying. When he urges you and me to remain in his love so that his joy may be complete and that our joy may be complete, that's just amazing. Then when he tells us to remain in his love and we'll produce fruit that lasts, fruit that lasts for an eternity, not fruit that is forgetful at times like my mom's son is, but fruit that lasts forever, that's amazing.

Remember, like we talked about last week, these words are in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday. A few hours later, Jesus is going to be betrayed. The disciples are going to run away and then a few hours after that, he is going to be on a cross. Then, in less than 24 hours, he is going to be in a grave. Like we talked about last week, he says “remain” about eight times so that he gets it through our thick heads. Did you notice how often he says “love” so it gets through our thick heads?

On Maundy Thursday there was a lot of time spent saying “A new command I give you; love one another. By this all people will know that you are disciples, if you love one another. Remain in my love. This is how you remain in my love. Obey my commands. My commands are that you love one another as I have loved you.” He says something that I think is fascinating when you stop to think about it. He says, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I’ve told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

What do you think of when you hear that word “joy”? Do you think of things that make you happy? Things that are good? Things that are good times maybe? The joy of on Mother’s Day going out for dinner or for brunch with the family and everyone getting together? That’s what you think of as joy, right? You probably don’t think of a root canal, right? Yet when Jesus says, “I obey my Father’s commands so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete,” he’s talking about doing something that’s a little bit worse than a root canal. He’s going to the cross. He’s taking your sins and my sins to the cross. He’s going through the physical torment of the cross. Even more than that, he’s going through the spiritual torment that is hell as God turns his back on God so that Jesus is abandoned on the cross and cries out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Joy? That’s not the picture we’d have of joy.

Then again, Scripture and our God doesn’t always act in our realm of logic. There’s another place in Scripture where it says it was for the joy set before him that Jesus obeyed the Father’s will and continued to the cross to die for us. This is God’s joy, that you and I are connected to him as a branch to the vine, that we believe he lived and died in our place and that he has taken away our sins. And that Christ for us, who has done all of these things, becomes Christ in us as we live for God. We live for God by loving one another. As we love one another because God loved us first, that makes God’s joy complete and it gives us a joy that we often say passes all understanding.

Joy, when it comes to our lives today, we hear all the time on television in commercials and various things that joy is all about me and I deserve a break today and I deserve this and I deserve that. Did you notice how Jesus turns that upside down? Joy is about someone else. His joy in obeying the Father’s command to save us, to take away our sins because you and I could never do it, his willingness to die because he loves us that much, he says “When you are connected to me, joy gets turned upside down. Joy isn’t just about you. It’s about living for others.” It’s not the way society thinks. It’s not the way the world thinks, just like we heard in our Second Lesson. But it’s the way that God thinks. And it’s the way that the Spirit in us leads us to approach life. Life is not

just all about me. As each of us as Christians grow in faith and mature and we understand that, we then find joy in living for someone else.

Here's what God talks about with living for someone else. He says when we do this, we'll produce fruit that will last. "You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant doesn't know his master's business. I have called you friends, for everything I learned from my Father I've made known to you. I chose you and appointed you to go bear fruit, fruit that will last." There's another concept that doesn't make any sense, right? Fruit that will last.

On Monday I bought strawberries. On Wednesday I threw them out because they were fuzzy. That isn't right, is it? Fruit doesn't last, right? You've experienced that. Have you ever dug behind something in the fridge and found something in the back there that is no longer very fruitful and not something you want to eat? That happens, right? Fruit doesn't last. That's the nature of fruit. It decays. It rots.

But God tells us, you and me, as we live for him and we love one another, we will produce fruit that will last ...the fruit that flows from loving others and putting the interests of other people ahead of our own interests, and obeying his commands, obeying all his commands. It's a high task he gives us, but he tells us that as we live in response to his love, he'll bless that. He'll see to it that it has an affect on us and on others so that others are connected to Christ and this fruit that lasts for an eternity is anyone that is connected to Jesus Christ and believes that he is their Savior. That can't perish, spoil or fade. That's the inheritance that's kept in heaven for us. Carrying out his commands, he's pretty clear on this, carrying out his commands of loving one another produces fruit that will last.

If you're a parent or if you're an employer, you give a child or you give a worker a task and they go off and they have at it and they work at it with all their heart. They come back all aglow, all fired up and wired up, and they say, "Look at how well I've done one-third of what you told me to do. Isn't this wonderful! I do this one-third better than anyone else around." What are you going to say to them? God has called us to love all people, love one another and carry out all of his commands.

As a congregation, we are excellent in some areas of carrying out his commands. We are very blessed and very gifted in some areas of carrying out his command to love one another. But do we do it for everyone? A case in point I guess I will give you is that I think we are excellent at our educational program for children. Our school is excellent. But it serves 16% of our membership, and 65%-70% of every dollar that is given to the general fund of our church goes to serve the 16% of our membership. It's great that we have such an excellent school, but what about the other 84%-85%? What are we doing to reach out to them, to actively go to them to connect them to the Good Shepherd, to connect them to the One who lived and died in their place?

The voters at the last meeting approved doing the shepherding program. It's something that I'm kind of excited about because it's a way we are attempting to go out, not just

wait for people to come to us, but to go out to our own members and say, "Here's the Shepherd's voice. This is the most important thing in the world. We want you to hear it. We want you to know it. We want you to be close to your Good Shepherd. This is fruit that will last for eternity, if you're connected to your Good Shepherd." I think it's exciting, but we need 40+ volunteers to do it. As I talk to people during the week, one of the things I keep hearing is "I don't know if we'll get 40 volunteers. I don't know if we'll get it to do something like this for the congregation as a whole because we are so busy volunteering at the school."

It's great that we volunteer at the school, but our God has called us to love all people. He doesn't say to love them until they're 14. He says love them until they are in heaven. That's what he has called us to do.

I hope you join me in praying that God blesses this effort that we find volunteers and that as we connect people to the voice of their Good Shepherd, we all grow and produce fruit that will last. That will bless every area of our ministry.

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." We're not asking you to die for your fellow members. You don't have to, Christ already did that. We're asking you to live for them. We're asking you to love them. We're asking you to put their connection to Christ ahead of your own convenience at times. Love them as Christ loved us. Amen.