

Easter VI  
May 16-17, 2009

***“The Greatest Love Brings the Greatest Joy”***

Text: John 15:9-17

Where do you find your greatest joy? People in our world have always sought it, but many are unsatisfied. Voltaire was a noted infidel; he had nothing to do with God. He once wrote: “I wish I had never been born.” Believing what he wanted, free from any constraints was of no help to him.

Like wise money was not the answer for Jay Gould, the American millionaire said in anticipation of death, “I suppose that I am the most miserable man on earth.” Position and fame is not the answer either because a man by the name of Lord Beaconsfield wrote: “Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age regret.”

It is captured best by an unnamed man of the third century who penned these last words to a friend: “It’s a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians—and I am one of them.”

Jesus tells us in our text: “These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” He speaks these words to remind the disciples and us of the love he knew from his Father and the love that he has shown to the world in the giving of his life for us. Like joy, the world has many ideas about love both of them are the greatest when they come from our Savior Jesus Christ from whom where we know that-

## **THE GREATEST LOVE BRINGS THE GREATEST JOY**

### **I. Which is yours in Jesus Christ**

### **II. Which assures you that you belong to Him**

#### **I.**

**A.** In the Good Shepherd chapter, John 10, Jesus said: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.” (John 10:17) As we think if these words a very overwhelming thought comes over us and it is the Father’s love for this world of ours. Think for a moment, it is a love shown to a world in constant rebellion against him and his word. He has that much concern for his creation. He sent Jesus into the world to suffer and die for it. This is the love relationship that Jesus is talking about in our text.

Jesus is talking about the relationship between him and his Father, him and his disciples, him and us and our love toward one another. It is because of the love of God toward us as his children that we have that relationship with him and one another.

In the book of Genesis, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac to prove his love for God. Abraham was willing to do it, but was saved from that emotionally wrenching experience. God told him: “Do not lay your hand on the boy, or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.” (Genesis 22:12) What God in his love and faithfulness did not make Abraham do; he did himself on Calvary’s cross.

**B.** Jesus’ life was lived on a mission for the salvation of the whole world as John 3:16 and other passages from Scripture teach us. We have a unity with our Savior because of God’s love and Jesus calls for us to remain there. He gives us the guide: “If you keep my

commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

Here Jesus sets the example for us. He is calling us to do what he did. There is no such thing as the person who says that the love Jesus and ignore his word at the same time. This means such things as not worshipping or communing; having different life styles on Sunday and the rest of the week; following the ways of the world around us in desires and pleasures-sexual and otherwise and having a callous disregard for what God's word says. We are all sinners and fail at doing what God says. It is because of this that we need a steady diet of his word both privately at home or in any number of classes that are offered here. We learn of God's love from that word as well as what he calls us to do. In that word we are reminded to remain in that love as we show that love toward others.

## II.

A. These words are not just orders from Jesus; they are for the purpose of bringing joy into our lives. This text occurs on Maundy Thursday and a great part of that evening Jesus talked about joy to his disciples. Christians don't live dreary lives. They have lives that have the assurance of forgiveness of sins and everlasting life in Jesus.

The world has offers that masquerade as that joy, but don't really come close. They are what we might call worldly happiness. They are often shallow because they are about selfish attitudes and the here and now. What Jesus brings to us is lasting joy and it exists regardless of the kind of day we are having at present. Jesus knows the joy with his Father and it is one that he gives freely to us. He commands us to love in the way that he has loved us. The next day after he spoke these words to his disciples he would go to the cross to make this possible for you by his death and resurrection on Easter.

**B.** “Greater love has no one than this that someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.” He was letting them in on his plans for the world and their part in it. They didn’t grasp it all at this time. Later would tell them that the Holy Spirit would come and guide them about their lives and what the future would hold for them.

This same Holy Spirit came to you in your baptism and created faith in your heart. He also keeps you in the faith as we confess in our creeds. It is that faith that produces the fruit in your life that God desires. A key fruit of faith is the love you have for each other.

In the time of our text it was common for people to choose a rabbi. This was not the case for the disciples. Jesus chose them. This is what your faith is all about; it is not about what you do, but rather what God has done. It has to be this way because left to our own devices we will always resist God. The Bible says: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.” (Romans 8:7)

The fruits of your faith are fruits that will last because God has created them in you and you are responding in faith. This is not something you consciously think about, they come naturally out of you faith. Jesus concludes by saying: “These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”

If we had one hundred pianos in a room and tuned them by one tuning fork they would be tuned to one another. They are not tuned piano to piano, but by a standard to which they all must bow. It is the love of our Savior that keeps and causes us to grow in love and joy that we remain and maintain that. In Jesus’ name. Amen.