



1616 W. Mequon Road, Mequon WI 53092
(262)241-3121 www.stjohnsmequon.org
Email: office@stjohnsmequon.org
Pastor James Tiefel
(262) 853-9723 (cell#)
Email: pastortiefel@gmail.com

Building Blocks Christian Learning Center
bbclc@stjohnsmequon.org

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 9, 2021
Mother's Day

Love One Another

Almost every country and culture on the planet remembers mothers and motherhood on a special day, and the great majority celebrate on the second Sunday in May. This year the Christian calendar joins the observance as it focuses our attention on love. Jesus' words in today's Gospel lead us to more than fond memories and grateful appreciation, however. They take us to the heart of love, his love for us, which leads us to love one another.

First Reading **Acts 9:36-42**
The story of a Christian woman who was always doing good.

Second Reading **1 John 4:7-11, 19-21**
Those who love God must love one another.

Gospel **John 15:9-17**
Christians remain in Jesus' love.

Sermon **John 15:9-17**

When it comes to family holidays, Mother's Day isn't nearly as big as Christmas or Thanksgiving. Its roots aren't all that deep: the official holiday goes back to 1907. There's no Mother's Day tree or Mother's Day turkey. But that's OK. Mother's Day is a significant family event that comes around every year and it's usually a good day. If your mom has passed on, it's kind of sentimental. If she's far away, you give her call or send a card. If she lives close by you bring her some flowers or invite her for dinner. And someplace in all of this, you say, "I love you mom."

I must have been eight or nine years old when my dad decided to take the family out to dinner on Mother's Day. The restaurant was out of town so we had to drive a ways. The place featured roast duck, one of my mom's favorites. So we arrived and the place was jammed. The hostess said there would be an hour wait. So we waited. My sister and I didn't make things any easier: "I'm hungry. When are we going to eat?" After an hour and a half, we were finally seated and the first thing the server said was, "I'm very sorry, but we're out of roast duck." The trip home was pretty quiet. We all said "I love you mom" but it didn't quite heal the hurt.

Sometimes love doesn't turn out the way we wanted it to. Love isn't always easy. Sometimes our words say one thing but our actions say something else. Sometimes love is tough; we talk about tough love, don't we. Sometimes love is sad and sometimes love is hard; the person we want to love hasn't shown much love to us. The reality is that there's a lot more to love than just saying "I love you."

It was Thursday night, the night before Good Friday. Jesus gathered his twelve apostles to share one last meal with them—and to share one last conversation. Within 24 hours Jesus would be lying in a tomb, stone cold dead. St. John tells us what was on Jesus' mind as he sat down at the Passover meal. **Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to**

leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. As the night began, as the night progressed, and as the night ended, Jesus talked about love, his love for them and their love for others. It wasn't a happy night. It was the saddest of nights, the hardest of nights, the toughest of nights. But on this night Jesus chose to talk about love.

With love on our minds this morning we're going to listen to Jesus in today's Gospel and we're going to hear

Some Words about Love on the Way to the Cross

Love is here enabled...Love is here defined...Love is here encouraged.

1. Sometimes love is easy. It's easy to love on your wedding night. It's easy to love your best friend. But sometimes love isn't easy. Actually, most of the time love isn't easy. There's a little voice inside every one of us called self-preservation. Basically, we're interested in taking care of ourselves first. It's part of our DNA. It's why we don't walk too close to the edge of a cliff or stick our finger into an electrical socket. But when it comes to love, self-preservation is a disaster. Loving myself first will always dominate loving others. Once our DNA joins forces with our sinful nature—and we all have that, too—love becomes impossible. People can certainly imitate love or fake love. Our world is filled with sexual love and brotherly love. But as long as I love myself first, I will never be able to love someone else first.

That's where Jesus began in the Gospel. He shows us how we can overcome that me-first attitude that lives inside all of us. He said, **As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.** There's the key: we will be able to love one another as we keep our eyes on Jesus. Jesus explained: **If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love.** Don't confuse these commands with the Ten Commandments. That's not what Jesus is talking about here. The commands Jesus is talking about urge us to repent of our sins and believe in his forgiveness. These are his calls to search the scriptures and continue in his Word. These are his encouragements to remember our baptism every day and receive his body and blood as often as we can. Being close to his Word and sacraments enables us to hear his promises and feel his presence and gain his power. It was just like the relationship he had with his Father: I want you to keep my commands and remain in my love, Jesus said, **just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.** Jesus gained what he needed from his Father to put himself second and to put us first, and we gain the same thing from Jesus. When we connect with Jesus, love can be real, it can be genuine, it can be lasting. With Jesus, love doesn't frown or strain or grunt. Love smiles and laughs and grins. Jesus said, **I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.** It was a difficult night for Jesus, that night before Good Friday, but the words he spoke on the way to the cross enable our love. They make our love possible.

2. For as much as people talk about love—and they talk about it all the time—you'd think that love would be easy. The trouble is that people don't get down to the realities of what love really is. Jesus takes us to his bottom line about love: **My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.** Those apostles had spent three years observing Jesus' love. They could have told us about his love for children and women and the sick and the poor. But they wouldn't understand for another couple of days how deep Jesus' love really was. St. Paul described the depth of love Jesus showed: **In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!** Real love, the kind of love Jesus enables, is love that puts others first and us last. That's love.

Here's the principle; Jesus quotes what everyone knew: **Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.** But how many people are actually called to make that kind of sacrifice? The soldier who jumps on a grenade? Yes. The fire fighter who tosses a child from a building ready to collapse? Yes. The chances are a million to one that none of us will ever be called on to show love like that. But true love, the love Jesus showed to us, is ready to show love like that. Love does what it takes, love does what it needs to do. Love doesn't refuse or excuse. Love has no NO in it. Love doesn't make trade-offs or set conditions. Love has no IF in it. Love like this, Jesus says, and you will love like I have loved you. **You are my friends,** Jesus said, **if you do what I command.** The night he spoke these words Jesus was facing

the ultimate challenge of self-giving love. But he took the time to talk about love and the words he spoke on this night define our love. They tell us what our love needs to be.

3. No one knew better than Jesus how hard it would be for his followers to love others as he had loved them. He knows how hard it is for us, too. The words of love we speak to our moms today have plenty of unhappy memories. The angry thoughts we've had about others, the mean words we've spoken, the selfish actions we've taken. Well, we don't have to talk about that on Mother's Day. We all know. Jesus forgives us, but he also calls on us to do better. He speaks to us as friends. **I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.** No finger pointing from Jesus, no harsh words, no demands, no threats. These are the words of a friend, the words of a teacher, a parent, a prophet, and a guarantor. These are the words of a loving Savior who walks with us and puts his arm around our shoulders and encourages our love. I know love is hard, Jesus says. Believe me, I know love is hard. But you can do better. Give it a try.

My father's goose was cooked because the restaurant ran out of duck. But you and I don't lack anything, not on Mother's Day, not on any day. We can't love on our own, but Jesus enables our love. We become confused about love, but Jesus defines our love. We are weak and unsure, but Jesus encourages our love. And all this he does with the cross in mind. St. John wrote in the Second Reading for today: **This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** Amen.

Pastor James Tiefel