

Mothers Day 2010
Sermon delivered 5-9-10
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Neal Collins, Pastor

John 14:23–29

²³*Jesus answered [Judas (not Iscariot),] "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.*
²⁴*Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.* ²⁵*"I have said these things to you while I am still with you.* ²⁶*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.* ²⁷*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.* ²⁸*You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.* ²⁹*And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."*

God is Love

What an appropriate Gospel for Mother's Day! As children most of us grew up with Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the tooth fairy, and a host of other stories. Many of us taught these stories along with the stories of Moses, David, Joseph, Mary, Ruth, and Jesus. The older we got and the older our children became the less magic, truth, and wonder these stories held for our lives and them. If you and your children were fortunate and blessed enough, you and they still have a sense that, in the End it is the love of God for the world that will prevail.

It is hard at times to see and understand this love Jesus is talking about. Most of you probably are more familiar with the opposite of love, which is not hatred, but indifference. Since the Enlightenment we have moved into a world of rationalism. Please don't misunderstand me; I am a child of God like you, marked with the cross of Christ, living between two worlds. I am also a child of the Enlightenment, valuing reason, history, science, and philosophy. One world seems to be the survival of the fittest, with Darwin ever present. From Dancing with the Stars, American Idol, Survivor, The Biggest Loser and a host of TV programs are built on the notion that one worthy and victorious person will win, and the others were not good enough to survive.

As a child of God, marked with the cross of Christ like you, I live in a quiet world that believes love will conquer all things and perfect love will cast out all fear. The words Jesus spoke to his disciples before his departure are the words he speaks to you and to me this day. Before we jump into our Gospel this morning, let us take a couple steps back and look at the big picture in the chapter. Just before this Gospel, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his betrayal; he gives them a new commandment, to love as he loved them. Peter denies he will ever leave. In the verses before our Gospel this morning Jesus tells them not to let their hearts be troubled, he is the way, the truth, and the life. He is leaving. Philip wants more information, Jesus responds, explaining the Father dwells in him, and then he says he who believes in me **will do greater works than these**. He promises not to leave them orphans.

The Presence of God

Judas, not Iscariot, but perhaps the brother of Jesus (Mark 6) or the son of James (Luke 6)... Judas is on Luke's list of the 12 disciples but not Matthew's list, or even Mark's. Nonetheless, Judas makes the request for a revelation of Jesus. There is no spirit descending on Jesus, or a voice saying, "this is my son with whom I am well pleased." Jesus reveals himself talking about love and keeping his word. He and the father will come and make their home with them. Let us scrape away the metaphysical language for a moment. What parent doesn't sense their presence in their child at birth? What child doesn't sense the presence of the parent? You know what Jesus is talking about here. His life was filled with the presence of God. He promised his disciples and us this same presence.

Enough

There are times when parents need to let go of their children and children need to let go of their parents so they can become their own person. Sometimes this happens when a child is differentiating, and comes out, "I hate you Mom" or "I hate you Dad." The job of the parent is not to retaliate, but to love. This is difficult. Last Monday I met with two young mothers in our parish exploring the feasibility of having a young mothers group. One of the mother's said, "There is not enough time to do it all" between work and caring for her newborn child. The powerful word I heard in all of this was the word "enough". I have met few individuals in my life that felt they were enough, had enough, and did enough. Jesus in our text says to his disciples and to you "you are enough, you are doing enough, you have enough with love and the presence of the father and I making our home in you. But we have convinced ourselves we are not enough. Imagine for a moment that you *are* enough - one of the problems with our faith is the incredible need to convince people how bad and worthless they are.

Hope

Imagine every morning as a young parent you would spend one half hour a day telling your young children how worthless they are, how they are not enough, can't do anything right, and berate them to no end, and then say, "I love you." There are mothers across this land who, in their own pain and suffering, do not know any differently. My heart goes out this morning to two mothers who are in the news. One is the mother of a young woman who was planning a graduation party for her daughter and now she is planning a funeral. The other is the mother of the young man whose eyes probably took delight as she gave birth to him, and is now preparing for him to possibly be sentenced to death. In the midst of a Darwinian world come the words of Jesus; who experienced darkness in the highest form with betrayal, denial, and death on a cross. He comes not with the message of how bad the world is, or how bad the disciples were with their abandonment and betrayal, but a word of hope, for them and for us.

A word of hope for parents who often feel they are like corks drifting in the ocean with an oil slick surrounding them. A word of hope in a world of not believing we are enough, or can go on, a word hope for those of us who believe the newspapers when they say that we are going to hell in a hand basket. That word of hope in the Gospel for us this morning is powerful. That Word is, the Father and I will come and make our home in you. You are not alone. The God that lived in Jesus, was one with Jesus, is the one with you. Take a breath; you are inhaling the presence of God. The Holy Spirit is present in your life. There is nothing you cannot face - because God is present. Nothing!!!

Putting out Fires

As parents, human beings, and the church, I think we spend too much of our time, energy, and resources solving problems and putting out fires. We look for problems to solve in our children, marriage, jobs, finance, and life. Jesus calls us to be more than problem solvers. He invites us into a world of visions, possibilities, and a new world with his presence. It is difficult to sense the presence of the Father and Jesus making their home in us when we are busy with problem solving, and fail to capture the dream and the vision for the world and for our lives.

World of Peace

What does this new world look like to Jesus? It is a world of peace. The peace he gives us is not the peace the world gives us. We need the peace the world gives us, which is a peace through victory. We need the street vendor in New York City, we need the policeman on the horse, and we need homeland security. But Jesus speaks of a different kind of peace, not the kind where we are free of problems and pain and have an eternal massage, but one where our hearts are not stuck in conflict and problems but can see a new tomorrow, a new song, a new day, new wine, and a new Jerusalem.

The world that Jesus envisions is a world where we are attentive to the movement of the Spirit of God - continuing to teach us and our children of all that Jesus commanded. He commanded we love as he loved us. This love we cannot do on our own. The Darwin Spirit continues to raise its ugly head, and we get the boot in the face from Orwell. Jesus envisions a different world than, "I don't get mad, I get even". The kind of love Jesus speaks of is the kind of love a healthy parent has for the newborn child, it is unconditional. This is a fragile kind of love and peace we need constancy to be reminded.

I recognize the power of Darwin's words, but I see the power of love in a young mother and father. I see the foot in the face on the news, but I know of the millions of people like you who struggling to love as Jesus loves you. Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches...bearing the fruit of Gods love for the world." I know you are bearing fruit. I pray you know you are enough in the eyes of God, contrary to what you say to yourself or others say to you. You are a child of God, marked with the cross of Christ. Jesus and the Father come and they make their home in you, and from this place you know Christ.