

Abiding and Obeying

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday May 9, 2021

John 15:1-17

Jesus said:

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you;”

This love that the Father has for Jesus is the love of the Trinity, the love that has been between the Father and the Son since before time, since before the creation of the world.

You and I are invited into the love and fellowship of the Trinity.

We have also been loved since before the day we were born.

Before a day was yet counted for us, Jesus loved us.

We are invited to be drawn into the love of the Father and the Son.

And to abide in that love.

In the Message it translates these words as “Make yourselves at home in my love.”

(Peterson)

That invitation to make ourselves at home in Jesus' love or to remain or abide in his love is not something I want to brush through quickly.

What does it look like to remain in Jesus' love for us?

What does it look like to make ourselves at home in his love?

We are a people who are often in a rush, we hurry, we speed, we want faster, more, quicker, pack more in, and we are not practiced in abiding, or remaining anywhere for long.

So what does it mean to abide in Jesus' love...part of the answer is in the verses that follow, and part of it is in the verses that John just wrote.

If we back up to verse 4, Jesus has said;

“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those

who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”

We are invited to be people who in an unhurried way practice the presence of God. We are invited to be a people of prayer who dwell in Jesus’ presence constantly, not leaving it.

We are invited to be attentive to Jesus, in whom we live and move and have our being.

There are not many days that we can devote entirely to prayer, but we can learn to make prayer like breathing- something that we are always doing whether we are consciously aware of it or not.

We are invited to do this through specific times of prayer, study, and worship, that leads us to a life where while we are living out the demands of our day, we are filled with inward worship and adoration. We work and play and eat and sleep, yet we are listening, ever listening, to our Teacher.

That is what abiding in Jesus and remaining in his love looks like.

The writings of Frank Laubach are filled with this sense of living under the shadow of the Almighty. *“Of all today’s miracles the greatest is this: to know that I find Thee best when I work listening...Thank Thee, too, that the habit of constant conversation grows easier each day. I really do believe all thought can be conversations with Thee.”* (Celebration of Discipline p.162)

Our whole lives are to be a wonderful conversation with God.

To abide in Jesus’ love we need to keep it in front of us, have it surround us, and fill our thoughts.

Kathleen Sladen wrote: “Every morning lean thine arms awhile upon the window sill of heaven and gaze upon thy Lord—then with the vision in thy heart, turn strong to meet the day.”

We remain in Jesus, and make ourselves at home in his love, when we fill our thoughts with the goodness of God, his faithfulness, justice, mercy, and love.

“If you abide in me, when you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.” says Jesus.

And then he continues; *“Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you’ll remain intimately in my love. That’s what I’ve done-kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love. I’ve told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be in you, and your joy will be overflowing.”*

Abiding in the Father filled Jesus with joy, pouring out of that joy came obedience to the Father’s will, which kept Jesus abiding in his Father’s love and joy.

Obedience arises out of love, love arises out of obedience.

Joy springs from obedience and love, first from Jesus' union with his Father, and then our joy will overflow as we learn the same obedience and union with the Son.

Raymond Brown, a great scholar of John's gospel, translates the word friend as "beloved." He says that our notion of friend is not intimate enough to capture what John heard Jesus say.

So when you hear that we are named Jesus' friends, it is not in the sense of acquaintances but dear or beloved friends.

"You are my beloved or dear friends, if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant doesn't know what their master is thinking and planning; but I have called you beloved friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father."

Our obedience isn't that of a slave obeying a master, but rather a beloved, trusted friend responding in faithfulness.

"I chose you," said Jesus.

God has placed a call on **your** life.

You have been summoned by God that's why you are here.

God chose you, God appointed you to go for him and to bear fruit.

Then Jesus gave us a promise.

It's one of those promises that has to be understood in light of all Jesus has said.

Jesus promises us that as we remain in him, abiding in his love, obeying his commands to love God and love one another, that God will answer our prayers.

When we pray the will of Jesus, God will respond.

God's love took the early church to surprising places.

Abiding/remaining in Jesus' love, the disciples bore fruit where they had no expectation that their message would be received.

God did far more through them than they could imagine because they remained in Jesus' love, and developed a deep and abiding awareness that the risen Lord was present, even if unseen.

Prayer:

Holy God, what a wonder that you have chosen us, appointed us to bear fruit for you and call us your dear beloved friends. Lord, teach us to daily gaze upon you, to learn prayer as a constant attentiveness to you, that we would learn your ways in love. Amen.