

Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 5th Sunday of Easter - May 18, 2025

[Music]

Maybe a couple of items before we begin worship today.

Again, it is a two book Sunday and as I look around I can tell you're really good at this.

So that helps, but just a bit of a reminder that the communion parts of the service will be in this smaller of the two books, the hymenal supplement.

I really wish they would have named it something more fun, but I wasn't there, what do I know?

And then our hymns and the psalms are in the bigger book.

And the psalms, Bob I think you managed to get around, didn't you?

And there are little tabs now, so if you're looking for the psalms there's a little tab in the book for you to find it, which is a brilliant and wonderful thing.

So thanks for taking care of that for us.

I used to take like a half hour to explain how to find the psalms, so man we're making good time already.

So the other thing is that if you need a copy of the Creed, I didn't know this, and I've been here now like almost four years.

So it's like, oh okay, but it is in the back of the hymenal and it's sort of buckled in where this plastic is.

So if you want it handy, you could do that.

Otherwise there are page numbers in both books for you to find the Nicene Creed.

One other item to talk about, and it does affect the order of service, but I want to explain kind of why I'm suggesting we do what we do.

The Gospel reading today is the one where Jesus tells us to love one another, and I remember a psychiatrist that I interviewed one time years ago for a program.

And he used to say, "The easier it is to say something, the harder it is to do."

And I think that is correct.

I mean if you think about like the experience of Mother's Day from anybody's perspective, I really am not in my lane to tell you everything about being a mom, am I?

But I have a hunch that there aren't a lot of greeting cards that talk about things like the 3am feedings, or the 3am phone call because the party got out of hand and your kid needs a ride, or you got a call from the principal.

I don't think the card companies get into that much.

But I would contend, and you can take me to task on this if I'm wrong.

The responses that parents make in those situations, that's love.

It's not the sentimental stuff, but it's the real love and action stuff, and I think that's what Jesus is calling us to do.

Now, that sounds good.

I think that there are many of us though who feel like we just don't get it right all the time, and we don't always live up to that.

So, do for it.

The Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to Saint John the 13th chapter.

[Music]

When he had gone out Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified and God has been glorified in him."

If God has been glorified in him God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

Little children I am with you no longer.

You will look for me and as I said to the religious authorities I now say to you,

"Where I'm going you cannot come."

I give you a new commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you.

You also should love one another.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples

if you have love for one another.

The Gospel of our Lord.

[Music]

The Sermon

Any side bets that I'll forget where I put this?

That's the smart money.

Grace and peace to you from God who loves extravagantly.

Jesus who loves without reserve.

And the Spirit who sows love among community that we may bear witness to God's amazing steadfast love.

Love one another.

Sounds good. I think you could put that on a pillow.

You could put that on the front of a churchable with it.

But as we suggested earlier it's a lot more difficult to actually do the thing

that it is to say the thing or represent the thing with some of our religious heart.

Think back if you would to Monday Thursday which is where the Gospel reading is often located.

It's Passover.

Jesus knows what's coming

and he loves by doing something that the disciples probably found threatening and

embarrassing.

He washed their feet.

He shared a meal with everyone knowing exactly what was happening in his community

as it was beginning to implode and fragment.

But Jesus continued to love as the Scripture says even to the end.

But what about the rest of us?

I want to speak a minute about a banking practice in the United States. I might have to grab.

I've got my sippy cup.

Pastor shouldn't go far without a sippy cup.

Thank you for your patience.

There's a practice in banking in the U.S. called redlining.

I don't know if that's a familiar term here.

But the idea of redlining is that if people are on the wrong side of the redline

when they're wanting credit to buy a house they don't get it.

Here is the tragic, illegal and discriminatory piece to that.

The bank decides where the redlines are based on the race of the people who live in a neighbourhood.

Certain neighbourhoods are redlined, which means if you want a business loan, a car loan, a home loan

and you live within the redline you're not going to get it.

It doesn't matter what your credit score is. It doesn't matter what business you own.

It's just you're the wrong kind of people.

May I not - this might be a really short sermon. Excuse me.

So if anybody's worried if I don't have voice by the end, there is a commentary that I've done on the website.

So at least there are some written words for you today.

The first lesson we heard read today, I think, pushes back against that notion of the redline

that we draw around others that we think love needs to be limited.

Even the disciples in that upper room, that Passover night, they did a fair amount of redlining in their history together

because there were some who were from Galilee, which was considered sort of like Podunk's milk.

There were some who were different strands of Judaism that didn't agree on much,

especially with regard to how do we live under Roman occupation.

And then there were the social climbing, "We want to be in charge people,"

that I'm sure that just made everybody feel good.

Here is this community of people that Jesus says love each other already.

As I say, not an easy thing, but yet this is what Jesus commands.

Because he sees what's coming, he knows what's coming,

he prepares his people by telling them that the only way across,

or the only way through this impending chaos is to love each other.

I'd like you to try a thought experiment, an imagination exercise.

It's a three-legged race that you're in, and you're thinking,

"Oh, what church picnic are we talking about?"

Well, we're not.

It is a three-legged race across the ice,

and this is ice that has been smoothed over by the Zamboni,

so it is as slick as ice can be in game seven, coming up later.

Going across the slick ice with you is your partner,

and this is your thought exercise,

so you get to decide if your partner is a foot taller or a foot shorter than you are.

That makes things tricky.

Oh, one more thing, as you're going across the ice,

you don't have bower skates last to your feet.

You have instead, and many of us will remember,

church shoes that had the real slick bottoms on them because they were a leather sole,

and before you broke them in, you could slide and skid on carpet, let alone ice,

but those are the shoes we're going to give you as you traverse this ultra-smooth ice,

with your partner who is either a foot taller or a foot shorter than you are in this three-legged race.

Oh, did I mention that the ice is not always even, that there are holes in it,

and that there are actually people who don't want you to get across,

and so they're going to body-check you now and again?

Did I mention that in this little thought experiment, or did I leave that out?

Guess what?

The only way across is you are tied to this person,

and you are committed to them to somehow, however you manage it, to get across the ice.

I think this is what Jesus says when he says, "You need to love one another,"

because that is really the only way you're going to make it across.

But maybe you like things more from Scripture about that, rather than just thought experiments,

and that's okay, I think I have something for you.

Show of hands, this is a question I hope won't embarrass anybody,

but how many of you have been to a wedding?

I was thinking earlier, wouldn't that be just hilarious?

No, I don't go to weddings, there's all those happy people on cake, and who needs that?

I don't want to go to weddings.

So I figured you probably had been.

Now, you don't have to answer this next part by raising your hands,

you can just sort of internally go along with this.

How many times at a wedding with all these happy people at a church wedding anyway,

does somebody get up where Bobby was this morning, and they read from 1 Corinthians?

If I have a tongue of an angel but do not have love,

and going on love is patient, love is kind, and it hopes all things...

You've been to weddings where that has taken place.

I think that's a good choice for a Scripture reading in a wedding,
mostly because I think we know that it's not all hallmark,
that it's work, it's commitment, it is being tied to that partner across the icy
expanse,
as you kind of navigate your own three-legged race.

There is something though, and I've made the mistake of doing this in wedding
homilies,

and they don't ask me to come back and do their second wedding,
so I don't know if it's a bad thing.

Oh, that was just weird, I just made that up.

But, oh, forgive me.

The antihistamines must not be.

Anyway, I have said in weddings, and I'm not sure that maybe I should have,
because it's a bit out of place, but do you know why Paul wrote those words?

It wasn't for a wedding, it was for a faith group of people,
much like the people who would have heard John's Gospel.

A group that was on the margins, kind of living almost an underground existence
under Roman occupation.

But in the case of this church in Corinth, a pretty rich metropolitan area.

They were so deeply divided by so many different controversies,
and you talk about redlining.

I mean, you were redlined based on what you ate, what you didn't eat,
what you sang, how you proclaimed, if you were able to speak in an unknown
language,

all of it, if you were rich, if you were poor, the red lines were everywhere,
and Paul wasn't having it.

He had said enough of this already.

And what was his intervention?

To appeal to the love that God extends to us, and that Christ-like love.

The one that doesn't keep track of infractions, but instead rejoices in the good.

The sort of love that as Paul would say, hopes all things, bears all things, endures all things.

That's the stuff that gets us along, whether it's the thought experiment of the three-legged racer,

whether it is just being church-ed together in a world that really leaves us maybe baffled

and perplexed most of the time.

We may have heard those words, "Love one another," on Monday, Thursday.

But how do they sound to the ears of people who have proclaimed he has risen?

He has risen indeed.

How does it sound to people at Easter?

I would suggest that if God raises Jesus from the dead,

if God confronts all of these forces that take life and dehumanize and cheapen life,

confronts them, and in love offers the rebuttal of the resurrection, then indeed,

the love of God is the way forward in the world.

This is up for debate.

You may have heard that Pope Francis had a conversation with a member of state in a little country just kind of south of us.

And in that discussion, the vice president tried to redline to say,

"Well, we only love people like in our inner circle and maybe another circle or two out."

That's how we do it.

And if it gets out as far as everybody else, well, that's all well and good.

Pope Francis blesses memory.

He said, "No.

Love does not redline.

Love is universal."

That's the kind of love that the church, whether it's Catholic, Lutheran, or whatever,

lives and proclaims that it is a universal love without redline, without reserve.

That is saving love.

That is universal love.

Do you think maybe the Pope had a peek at John chapter 3?

You know that line about God so loved?

Yes.

Yeah, you're saying that for me.

The world. God so loved the world.

Yeah.

And so, we can say with the apostle Paul, I think,

that there are three things that remain as we white-knuckle it through life

as it seems to be weirder and weirder all the time for some of us.

There are three things that abide.

Faith, hope, and love.

And the greatest of these, yes, is love.

Amen.