

“Love Like Father God Does”

Message by DD Adams
Kemptown Providence UMC
6th SUNDAY OF EASTER
Holy Communion Sunday
May 6, 2018

The New Testament lesson for today is from John’s gospel, chapter 15, verses 9 through 17. “As the Father loved me, I too have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete.

This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you. No one has greater love than to give up one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I don’t call you servants any longer, because servants don’t know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you *friends*, because everything I heard from my Father I have made known to you.

You didn’t choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you could go and produce fruit and so that your fruit could last. As a result, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. I give you these commandments so that you can love each other. This is God’s word for God’s people.

Please pray with me. God of all love, mercy, and grace, open our hearts and minds. We pray your blessing on the reading, hearing, and understanding of your

word today. Teach us Holy Spirit . . . may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! Years ago a pastor said to me, “If you have one or two true friends in your lifetime you’re blessed.” Twenty years later, I still agree. It’s true, friends are rare and should be cultivated and cherished.

In this passage, Jesus calls us friends. He no longer calls us servants because servants don’t know what their master is doing (vs 15). Now, Jesus calls us friends. It’s a friendship that he has initiated, and it’s a call to loving faithfulness to trust and commitment.

Jesus tells us in verse 13 just how far this friendship is willing to go in order to prove his love. He says, “No one has greater love than to give up one’s life for one’s friends.” Jesus’ sacrifice of himself, to give all of himself for us is what this deep and committed friendship is rooted in; that’s how we know he loves us.

It’s not a love that’s from mutual attraction, because he chose us. We didn’t choose him (15:16). And we’re not chosen to feel privilege of any kind, but we’re called to bear fruit for the kingdom. And when the going gets tough in our lives, guess who sticks by us, believes in us, prays for us, shows us the better way—the loving way—and sees us not for where we’ve been, what we’ve done, *what we will do*, but he sees us for who we will become. Jesus sees us thru eyes of faith.

As friends of God we're called to love as Jesus loves. When Jesus shares with his friends about his death, resurrection and his departure he does what a friend would do, he shares. He says, "This is my commandment: love each other just as I have loved you." Jesus states this agape love as a commandment. It's something he lives by, and he gives it to us just as his Father gave it to him to demonstrate. "As the Father loved me, I too have loved you" (vs 9); this kind of love Jesus demonstrates is agape love.

But this is the challenging part, where do we begin if we want to feel and emulate this kind of love that God loves us with? One place to start may be to embrace and receive God's love now. To be silent so you can feel it. Feel it in the silence of prayer. Stop the conversations with others and the passing of scenarios and discussions in your own mind. Stop—everything—except—the silence.

Henri Nouwen, a professor, writer and theologian says this about silence in prayer. "Without silence we will lose our center and become the victim of the many who constantly demand our attention" (*You Are the Beloved: Daily Meditations for Daily Living*, p. 136).

God is love and is the very definition of love. And the only way to truly know love is to know God and to be in relationship with him. I encourage you to take the time to steal away from the things that keep you from God—as often as

you can and as much as you can. Find that inner core of silence that brings peace and allows you to embrace the love of God.

God of love, touch our hearts to take the time to hear the silence of who we are as God's children. Help us to claim this identity as you lavish and pour your love on us. Help us to love as Father God loves. Amen.