

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

glcportland.org | (503) 256-1835 |

pastor@glcportland.org

Rev. Elizabeth Durant, *Interim Pastor*



Lectionary Bible Study for Fifth Sunday of Easter

John 15:9-17

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12

After declaring that he is the vine and we are the branches, Jesus continues to teach his disciples during the Passover meal. Jesus makes the relationship between himself, God, and the people plain: As Abba God loves Jesus, so Jesus loves us. As Abba God commanded Jesus, so Jesus **commands** us.

How do we “**abide**” – remain, stay awake – in this love? By following the commands of Jesus, the way that he has followed his Abba’s commands. “If you keep my commandments (entolas), you will abide in my love” (v. 10). Commandment (entolé) is a feminine work in Greek that means an injunction, an order, a law...with a focus on the end-result. It is not a suggestion, not an option, but **an action-driven, focused, purposeful statement: DO THIS.**

What must we do? Love one another.

LOVE. *Agape*. It is such a big word, and often overused in our society. I “love” my morning coffee. I love my children. How can one word really capture the range and depth of feeling and action?

Of course, the love that Jesus is talking about is so much bigger than coffee. It is like the love we have for our most cherished beloveds: those people who are our soul-friends, companions of our heart, the ones we would do anything for...the ones we might, yes...even die for. **This kind of love makes us vulnerable.** It opens us up. It is risky. It requires courage.

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (v. 13, Inclusive version).

These are words spoken by someone who is going to be crucified. No greater love...that is the love that Jesus has for us. Jesus gave his whole life for us. Jesus is a model of the kind of whole-hearted loving that we are called to share with one another.

Agape is unconditional love -and it isn’t about one person doing all the loving and the other person doing all the taking. That all-or-nothing relationship isn’t the kind of “self-sacrificial” love that God intends for us. No, this kind of love is full of mutual regard. It comes in response to receiving and living within the fullness of the love that God has for us. Out of that fullness, we give our lives in compassion, in service, in solidarity.

After all this, Jesus changes the way he refers to his followers. No longer are his disciples to be considered servants but friends. The status of “friend” means more than being Jesus’ acquaintances or companions; rather, it suggests an intimate relationship of knowing one another. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (v. 16). Jesus **CHOSE** us for love.

How does it feel to be chosen for love? Remember that Jesus the Good Shepherd knows us by name. Jesus the Gate protects us. Jesus the Vine gives us abundant life. And Jesus, the source of Love, teaches us how to

practice love for ourselves and love for others. **What actions of love do you need to take this week?**

Holy One, show me in a real and powerful way what it means to be chosen and loved by you. Open my heart to act in love this week. Help me to abide within you and “bear fruit” by sharing your love with others. Thank you for choosing me and appointing me to be your hands and feet in the world. Amen.

