



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon- Sunday Rogate (Proper Easter 6B) 2018

*Prayer in the Name of Jesus!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • **The Word of God for this Sermon is written in John 15, 9-17:**

- <sup>ESV</sup> <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.
- <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.
- <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.
- <sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
- <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.
- <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you.
- <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.
- <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.
- <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another.
- **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and give light to our minds and our hearts so that we will pray in Your name in truth and in the Spirit! Amen.*

### • **Dear beloved of God!**

- *"Love one another as I have loved you"* commands Jesus. And this Love is especially directed at God's *children*, as we have heard from the Epistle reading [1]John 5,2]: *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments."*
- If we love the Father's children, we love Him and if we love the Father we love those who have been born from Him. Do you see the focus on loving members of Christ's Body?
- In this same context we hear about prayer, *"so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you."* This is what Jesus wants to give to us today, wants to open up for us anew, today, so that we will pray to the Father in His Name! That we will see the great need we have and the wonderful promise He gives to us! Then prayer ceases to be a burden and becomes a wonderful gift!

- Therefore, let us consider what Jesus means when He speaks about Love.
- If we look around and listen around one cannot help to notice how individualistic our society is turning. The effects are manifold. Any club or associations where a high level of commitment is expected have a difficult time. This finds its echo in the fact that marriage as a covenant, as something that binds us together, is losing its preference. People of today like to float around, rather than be committed to specific life-long relationships. People like to keep things open ended. Keep as many choices as open as possible, so that one will not be burdened by a commitment.
- This has impacted the so-called popular way of doing church, as is said today. People like community churches because it means they can float in and out, move in and out to others easily without having to commit to one congregation all their life. Who still wants to be bothered with meetings? Who still wants to be bothered with flower duty lists and cleaning the church grounds? Who still wants to belong to a local congregation with all its niggles and infighting over who knows what issues? Who wants to be burdened with so many peoples problems, with synodical duties, problems of other congregations?
- Its much better to worship God on the beach all quietly by myself with the sun rising, maybe with my family, not with all those problematic sinners in the churches who are just there to make life difficult. I know, its probably an overstatement, but I think you get what I am trying to point out by sketching this picture.
- Now, let us remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* Jesus was saying that only through Baptism, the rebirth of water and the Spirit-God's doing, can someone enter the kingdom of God! The whole purpose of Jesus being the Lamb of God is to get us into the *reign of God*, into the Body of Christ, where a *multitude of believers are!* He takes us to other people, to a new community, called by Him! Our inclination towards individualism, running around with our eyes fixed on our cellphones, is not at all where God is taking us. As new children He introduces us to our new family, whom we have not chosen, whom He has chosen, just like with our biological family, where we also had no choice.

- And in this family God wants us to take in our place. This relationship with God is a covenant relationship. Its anything but loose! God is highly committed to us, to save us. We are completely dependent on Him, like branches of the vine depend 100% of the vine. In Baptism we were married to our bridegroom. We are grafted into the vine, which is a highly fixed and steadfast relationship, especially for our benefit! Let us not forget, that this steadfastness, the covenant relationship, God has signed a contract with us, if you will in Baptism, this certainty benefits us the most! There we have a rock to stand on, to cling to in stormy times. The steadfastness, the rocky character of the relationship is for us!
- Don't allow the devil to deceive you and lure you to reckon that a loose relationship with many options open is better for your spiritual future.
- And now, Jesus comes and says, I want you who have been grafted into me, to look around you and see that those around you are also grafted in, just like you. These are also the children of God. And with the Love I have loved you, I want you to love them. You cannot have a Baptism covenant with me, but a loose relationship with my other brothers, with the local congregation.
- You cannot float in and out of my congregations and still claim to be married to me, but not to my Father's children. To Christ, but not to His Body. Weren't you baptised into the Body of Christ? You entered Christ's kingdom consisting of forgiven sinners! Jesus wants you to love them in the same way He loved you.
- Hence, we come to the true meaning of godly love: Jesus says, I loved you and have forgiven your sins, whilst you were a sinner! No, I didn't wait until you were clean and then only did I forgive you. It is also not true that I have justified your sins. They are condemned. They are in the grave, dead and crucified, together with your old Adam. They are not acceptable and never will be. But, I have removed condemnation from you, because I have suffered the curse myself on your behalf.
- Therefore, love the other children of my Father as I have loved you. Yes, there right where you are, in the local congregation where you are nurtured with my means of Grace.
- You are going to say to me, but Lord, its so difficult! How on earth am I going to cope? Remember my word for today [16]: "*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should*

*abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”*

- Now you will understand what I mean with saying ‘whatever you ask the Father in my name!’ “Whatever” will depend on your specific need and issue you might have in your local congregation with some of the people. Jesus joins us to His community and directs us to work out our faith in Him amongst fellow forgiven sinners! This is not going to be easy, neither for those who have to deal with you and for you to deal and share with them.
- But, this is the place where Jesus wants us to bear fruit, and He says that your fruit should abide, should remain, just like you remain and abide in Christ. That is where all our power, food, sustenance and renewed forgiveness comes from, from abiding in Christ!
- How dangerous is it to go outside a local congregation of Christ, because there, where all seems tranquil and easy we are in great danger of losing true faith, because God’s Love is only activated, is only alive where forgiveness flows through us to others. In other words all difficulties and issues in a congregation God turns into a training field to make us fit in forgiving others, in shaping us into conduits of His forgiving self-sacrificing Love!
- That of course doesn’t mean that we need to cause issues in a congregation- that is not necessary- there will be enough to fill the “whatever” of the prayer-promise abundantly. It is so important that we spread this message, to all other Christians, on the outside of congregations, so that their faith will not begin to wither as they are cut-off from the local congregation which is part of the Body of Christ.
- It’s high time that Christians recommit themselves and abide in their local congregations steadfastly, because that is where the Head fulfils His promises and that is where Christ produces abundant fruit through us. And that is also where true joy, a joy this world cannot understand, will break forth!
- Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son and Glory be to the Holy Spirit!  
*Amen.*
- *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Amen. [2 Cor 13, 14].*