

SERMON 10/27/19

John 15:9-11 ESV

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 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. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

“At Home with God”

INTRO:

Through the Bible this year... – last gospel of Jesus; John! A deceptively simple book, with rich complexity underneath, that is warm and relational...

...and through this passage today, we find ourselves asking: What's it like to live with God?"

BIG IDEA "What is it like to abide with God? It is marked with Love, Obedience, and Joy." This is true today and will be true in eternity.

What's it like to live with God? ...What's it like to live with you? What would your roommate, sigling, family member, say about living with you? becoming a newlywed, etc...??

What's it like to live with me? I ask my wife this question, and she said I'm "adventurous"; always looking for something fun for our family to do. I'm a 7 (?). She says I don't procrastinate – that I get projects done." Crazy, right??

In the same way we grow together with those we live with, God desires that we grow together with Him in this same way...He is always with us!

As we have been reflecting on the "saints" in our lives that have gone before, we reflect on the truth that all believers have been promised eternal life with God in heaven, and we know that Jesus who is also alive forever plays an active role in our lives through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The book of John starts out with this sentence; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This is speaking of Jesus as “the Word” – He was *with* God, and He was God....from the very beginning. And in Matthew’s account of Jesus’ last words to his disciples, he says “I am *with* you always, to the end of the age.” Jesus is with us, and he’s always been.

But, how often do we forget that Jesus is *with* us? That the Son of God is present with us through the Holy Spirit, every day, every hour? And that there is an intimate union, and deep relational connection that Jesus desires for us to have with him?

Maybe you’ve created reminders in your life that help you remember that God is always with you; stickers on mirrors, Bible verses on walls, etc...

My seminary’s graduation gift: a ring.... *SLIDES! / taking it too far? My tattoo pic...

We’ve been seeing and hearing the word John uses for this connection and relationship; it’s “abiding”. It’s an older word we don’t use too much these days, but it means to be “at home with”, to be in a safe place, where we’re restored, comforted, and able to rest.

And the first place Jesus invites us to abide with him in, is his love:

(1. “At Home, in Love”)

John 15:9

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

How have we seen the Father loving Jesus through the gospels we’ve been reading and studying these last few weeks?

One of the first instances, is Jesus’ baptism in Matthew; where God says to Jesus; “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

- approval, affirmation, encouragement, validation, identity

(ask congregation to participate with additional responses???)

- the angels comfort Jesus after his temptation in the desert...

- the transfiguration on the mountain, where God says "this is my son, listen to him"

THIS is the same way that Jesus loves us, and he says "abide in my love". The Message paraphrase says: "Make yourselves at home in my love."

How does that invitation strike you? Are you comforted and relieved? Or, is it uncomfortable and challenging? Can you believe and accept that Jesus loves you like this? Some of us might wrestle with the idea that we need to deserve this kind of love, earn it in some way...or it can't be real.

*story of my friend at ISF who spent an *entire semester* with the first "week" of devotionals about God's love...it was too difficult to accept...

But this is why Jesus' message is called "Gospel" or "good news". This love is a gift that we could never earn or deserve - a gift that is offered through Christ's sacrifice for us. Jesus obeyed God's will for His life, even to death on a cross. Jesus followed the commandments of his father, Jesus says he abides in His Father's love through obeying his commands, and he invites us to also abide with him in the same way.

(2. "At Home, in Obedience")

(v. 10) "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."

So there's another important component to this relationship with God through Jesus - this "abiding"; and it's obedience. Jesus says "keep my commandments"...

What goes on in your heart as you hear this statement today? Do you feel confident, assured that you've been doing a pretty good job of keeping God's commandments, or do you feel convicted, doubting whether or not you've done very well at this, thinking about which commandments you've maybe kept and which ones you've disobeyed. Are you like me, wondering which commandments *exactly* is Jesus talking about, so you can try and make sure to do *those ones* at least??

Thankfully, Jesus himself, a few sentences later describes exactly the commandment He's talking about...are you curious? Here it is, verse 12: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

What a challenging charge for us today! Jesus loved sacrificially, even giving up his life for us, and he encourages us to love others the same way. It's actually only one commandment, right?...but it determines so much of our behavior.

What if we ALL loved each other like this? What would our world be like if we all loved each other like Jesus?

Obviously, none of us does this perfectly all the time. I'm grateful that Jesus' **FIRST** invitation is to **His love - His unconditional love, and *then* he challenges us to obedience.**

But this obedience is within the context and framework of his LOVE. We make ourselves "at home" in His love, and it's from that place of acceptance, assurance, confidence, and rest, that we seek to obey God by loving one another well.

Even in this "All Saints" remembrance today, we recognize that none of those we look up to were perfect all the time (or ever!). They made mistakes and failed to love perfectly, and yet God used them in our lives and blessed many through them. These "saints" get honor from us and from God, not according to the world's values, but according to God's.

“Saints have their power, their brilliance, their victory, their attraction, and have no need of carnal or intellectual greatness, where these have no place since they neither add or subtract anything. They are recognized by God and the angels, and not by bodies nor curious minds. God is enough for them.” - **Blaise Pascal**

Like all of God’s commands, this rule to love one another is for OUR good and flourishing. We benefit by following the guidance of God, and Jesus describes this benefit in our last verse today. He says, (v. 11) “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

I think we often consider the outcome of obedience being avoiding punishment (obey the law/obey your parents...or else!). But here Jesus links obedience with joy! So much better!

(3. “At Home, in Joy”)

So, what’s the benefit for us? Joy. Jesus’ desire for us is *fullness* of joy. We all want joy in our lives. It’s illusive to many. There are so many quotes on the internet about joy....

some saying you have to grab it for yourself, or you have to string joyful moments together to get it, or that it mysteriously comes to you when you least expect it. But here’s how our Creator has designed us to experience joy; by “abiding” in Jesus’ love - receiving it as a free gift, and by following Jesus’ example (the greatest “Saint” of all) through loving others sacrificially.

If we do this, we will experience real joy.

What’s your “joy meter” like today? How joyful are you? Thankfully, joy is not being “extroverted” or the “life of the party”. Joy is deeper than happiness, deeper than circumstances.

Listen to how Jesus uses the word “joy” when talking to his disciples:

John 16: ²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Joy is linked to relationship – to connection...

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q1: What is the chief end of man? (A: “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever!”)

2 John 1:12 "Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete."

Again, joy is linked to relationship – to connection...

What would our church look like if our joy was “full”?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Senior Minister at Westminster Chapel in London from 1943 to 1968 writes:

“the greatest need of the hour is a revived and joyful Church...Nothing is more important...than that we should be delivered from a condition which gives other people looking at us, the impression that to be a Christian means to be unhappy, to be sad, to be morbid, and that the Christian is one who ‘scorns delights and lives laborious days’....

What might the world react differently to the church if we all experienced joy to the full?

Again, joy is linked to relationship – to connection... * it all starts with making ourselves at home in God’s love.

Jesus says abide in my love, keep my command to love one another, and in so doing, you will experience full, lasting joy.

...And get this; this “abiding” with God – it’s actually good practice for our eternity ahead. Because in heaven, we will be with God like never before – we will see God “face to face” as it says in (1 Cor. 13:12).

The Christian life is practice for Heaven.

An overarching question you might have in hearing this today, is simply HOW do you “abide” in Christ? What does that look like in prayer, or in life? The Bible describes it sometimes as being “in Christ”. So how do we practice being “in Christ”? One way is through reminding ourselves of our true identity in Him. We are tempted to find our identity in so many other things, and this distracts us from being “in Christ” or abiding in His love. We often find our identity in earthly titles like “top employee”, “class president”, “mother of the year”, “hot dog eating champion”, “surfer”, “coach”, “car buff”, “blogger”, “sister”, “brother”, “father”, or “best host” or maybe we’ve even felt defeated by negative, or shameful titles like “addict”, “loser”, “outsider”, or “shy person”, but these are not who we REALLY are.

We have the honor of hosting memorial services occasionally here at the church, and there is always some kind of display or table set with the items that represent the life of the one who’s passed away, like pictures, awards, a fishing lure, or military hat, or flag...

What items will be at your memorial?

These are not our true identity. Our true identity is IN Christ.

The apostle Paul had a lot of worldly accolades and titles, and he describes it like this in Philippians 3:7-9:

“If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law,^[c] blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him”

Galatians 3:27-28

for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

So, let's spend a few moments in closing prayer today, shedding some of these false identities and putting on our true identity in Christ, abiding in Him – abiding in His love.

***** Consider some of the identities that you've closely associated yourself with? What is it like to cast those off, strip them away, and simply be found in Christ? Let's whisper some silent prayers to God now; "At the core of my being, I am not _____." "Down deep inside, I'm truly not _____."

Now, let's take a moment to reaffirm our true identity. Let's remind ourselves in our own words, "I am *in Christ*"....

Colossians 3:1-3Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.