

The Sixth Sunday of Easter (2018)

John 15:9–17 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

[Jesus said:] “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. *You are my friends if you do what I command you. 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. 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. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

In the Name of Jesus.

Where Friend Jesus IS, there His friends are; where His friends ARE, is where Friend Jesus is!

My dear ones: it’s easy to go wrong at the first step! The Lord sets us right on what He IS as our Friend—we slow down this morning to savor, to adore, to worship.

Yesterday, my sweetheart needed a new washing machine. So, check with the best friend you have for washing machines. Overwhelmed by all the choices, she called Friend Charlie, who knows all the ins and outs of these things. And after telling him of one that looked good to her, Friend Charlie asked, ‘Can you reach the bottom of

the wash tub?’ Friend Laura said ‘No.’ Friend Charlie said, ‘Then you can’t have THAT ONE!’ Doesn’t MATTER what else is super duper about that laundry machine! If God made the machine too deep for your arms to reach the bottom, it’s not for you!

It struck me this week: another reason I have such a hard time understanding and then proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It’s because the Word of God in our Flesh—YES, He’s IN our flesh, but HE...IS...NOT...OUR...FLESH!

Meaning, He is NOT what the apostles recorded as ‘FLESH,’ as even the Lord said in THIS Gospel, according to Saint John! ‘Flesh gives birth to flesh, The Spirit gives birth to Spirit!’

IMAGINE!

ALL the WARPED things WE do with all God’s gifts from heaven—Our FRIEND...DOESN’T...EVEN...KNOW...HOW...TO...WARP...THEM! He wouldn’t know where to start!

THAT is what hampers me when I study the Word. And it is where all lousy teaching and preaching originates.

HE, in our FLESH, takes us all the WORDS that WE use—but then He CANNOT use them the WAY we use them!

Let me get this out right here! This means that when HIS Word says that our Baptism into Christ saves us, we may ignore any voice that says it does not! Same with His Body and His Blood given and shed for us, to eat and the drink; same with the authority given to His Church and her poor ministers to absolve sins; same with His pledge that where His Gospel is, there HIS Spirit is, and if you want to find His Spirit, look for the Gospel—look for His Church!

Look for His FRIENDS!

HE means nothing but DELIGHTFUL things with that word! Oh—and WE would LIKE to mean nothing but delightful things! But how often has a FRIEND of yours turned out to be just ANOTHER person who's WITH YOU until you are no longer beneficial to him? As long as you can enrich and flatter him, he's committed; when that dries up, 'Where'd he go?'

Oh, and my FRIENDS: how often have YOU become THAT sort of friend? There, with the next man, until

YOU...

JUDGE....

THAT....

THAT MAN...IS...NO...LONGER...-----WHAT?!

Friend Jesus DOESN'T have it IN HIM to be like us!
IN our flesh, He is NOT our FLESH! NO—He is the
LOVED Son of the Father—BEFORE He took on our
flesh; and now that He is, without end—PRAISE THE
LORD!---STUCK with our flesh! STUCK with us!

THAT is what He means by calling His disciples His
FRIENDS! HE means that HE is THERE, without fail, as
the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world!
You got sins? Expect the Lamb to BE there, with you, be-
FRIENDING you!

AND...are you hearing, seeing, eating and drinking,
nothing but good cheer from heaven above, DESPITE what
YOUR flesh has been doing, or other flesh has been
pressing you down? Well, then, know for certain, that your

Friend is with you! Happier! The SPIRIT of your Friend is with you, there!

Our FRIEND, the Holy Spirit! HE pledges and commits to us the voice of Friend Jesus: ‘Y’ALL did NOT choose ME! What sort of FRIEND would I BE, if I waited for THAT to befriend y’all?! I have chosen you!’

I commend to y’all the Large Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther.

On the First Commandment, Luther sums up so simply. The most COMMON form of idolatry is Mammon: happy if we get our hands on THINGS, sad when they slip away. But the most INSIDIOUS form of idolatry is self-approval, self-justification, with its attendant judgmental spirit over the wrongs of all others.

But, NOTICE, my FRIENDS, that Friend JESUS TALKS...LIKE...MOSES! Oh, He TRIES! But He just doesn’t have it in Him!

Y’all ARE my FRIENDS when y’all DO what I COMMAND!

Hold on! The Gospel **BEGINS WITH**: The **LAW** came through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ!

Friend Jesus is **NOT** Moses—not in any way. But you see, that's His problem! **MOSES** is **ALL** that our **FLESH** can understand! It's as if Jesus is **TRAPPED**—**CONSTRAINED** to use the **VOCABULARY** of Moses, of threat and punishment, merit and reward—but **HE CANNOT** mean what Moses means!

That's why He ends up the way He ends up! The **ONLY WAY** He knows to produce lasting fruit in people like you and me, His friends!

He took up our flesh—but never acted like our flesh.

He took up the role of King—but wore a crown of thorns, and was hailed as King **ONLY** when He was the **LEAST** powerful man in the world—**AS...WE...JUDGE!**

He came to take sins away from every man, from the world—and only **SOOTHED** consciences????!!!

He settled fearful men's fears and raised the death-deserving dead, and FED men who ONLY wanted FOOD—but then pledged them something utterly MORE!

He pledged flowing, living water—but had no bucket to lower into the well.

He guaranteed BREAD that IGNORES death, AFTER He was DONE stuffing men's mouths and bellies!

He can't DO the LAW, my friends!

What is His commandment? WHAT is His THREAT?

His COMMAND is THIS: YOU had BETTER be GLAD that GOD plunged Himself into your weak flesh—and that HE has ATTACHED Himself to you, to the world, LOVED you, without ANY REFERENCE to what you have done or will do. I ORDER y'all to IGNORE YOUR violence against God, and rest SECURE that GOD has completed all that He DEMANDED---

In a Man Who assures us that He is attached to us, He

loves us, He is our FRIEND—and the LAST thing He would ever do is to PASS before us for us to REVIEW and judge for ourselves!

Instead, the PROOF of His befriending of us is to guarantee that He will SURROUND His friends with others who desperately NEED a FRIEND—a Friend like Him!

And HE raises us to those heights! To live and reign where HE lives and reigns?

In THIS Gospel, where is THAT?

On the floor; dressed as a slave; washing the disciples' feet. And THREATENING Peter—'If I do NOT wash your feet, YOU have nothing to do with ME!'

The world CANNOT understand this COMMAND:

You BETTER be so glad that you rise from the dead, that YOU outshine even the Son of God in the flesh as YOU love, befriend, attach yourself to those who can benefit you NOT AT ALL! You had BETTER be SO CERTAIN that God CANNOT unglue Himself from YOU, that despite your attachment to things and your ready

DETACHMENT from those who hurt you, your God could NOT be LESS interested in your successes or failures!

I understand how to respond to the threat and promise of Moses: Keep the Law and live; break the Law and die.

You and I know JUST WHAT to do with THAT!

PRETEND!

FEAR!

FAIL OURSELVES!

FAIL OTHERS!

AND THEN DIE!

How do we RESPOND to the COMMAND of our Friend, in which there is NO THREAT?

OH---that is the point! When HE commands, He could not be LESS interested in how WE pitch in! When HE commands, HE takes the whole burden on Himself!

Now that's a friend! That is Friend Jesus!

And He's not done!

He is SO MUCH THAT Friend to us idolaters, that He gives us the very breath from His lungs, from inside Him, from His flesh—yet not our flesh!—

And assures us: when YOU attach yourself to, love, befriend one another—taking the whole burden upon YOURSELF!—then whether or not YOU are happy with what's going on, heaven could not be more pleased!

He is not like you, my friend; He is not like me! He has changed all our words; He has changed our world; and One Day, soon, we'll even SEE that in the Name of Jesus! Amen!