

Recognizing Resurrection—In Our Serving

John 14:15-21

Sunday, May 17, 2020

Beargrass Christian Church

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. So...how's the pandemic going for you?
 - 1. What are some things that you miss the most?
 - 2. What are some of the lessons you have learned?
- B. Our Corona-kids and Baby Zoomers have some insights.
 - 1. Some of them talked about school.
 - a. Sam said: "I have learned that 2 hours of homeschool is way worse than 8 hours of regular school."
 - b. After a lesson, Devon said: "Dad, throw away your madness."
 - 2. Other comments are about family dynamics.
 - a. Kate said: "After that Zoom call can you give me a hug-hug?"
 - b. Evelyn, 5, said: "Mommy put on makeup and a dress today just to feel like she was going somewhere."
 - c. Jack, 5, said: "Dad, it's called Lion King, not Tiger King—and I love Lion King, so I'll stay up and watch it with you."
 - d. Reid, 3, simply said: "I think Momma needs a nap."
 - 3. And some insights are just sweet, tender and loving.
 - a. Maddie, 10, said: "It seems like things are falling apart. No school, stuck at home, and other stuff. But the sun is out and we've been going for walks. Is there no better time for this?"
 - b. Harper, 4, said, "Mom, Dad, after the germs are gone, I still don't want to go anywhere—I want to be with you forever."
 - c. (That one gets to the heart of today's text and message.)

II. WE ARE NEARING THE END OF THE EASTER SEASON.

- A. We have been trying to "recognize resurrection."
 - 1. We have looked for new life through our tears, in creation, in our doubts, in the Shepherd's Voice, and in God's House.
 - 2. Today we will think about how following Jesus' commandment to love as he loves brings new life into the world.
- B. As I mentioned last week, whenever we need some reassurance, we often go to the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John.
 - 1. The first part of the chapter has an emphasis on the future.
 - a. Jesus says that there are many dwelling places within the home of God, and he promises to prepare a place for us.
 - b. But we are not just to chill out until that time comes.
 - 2. The last part of the chapter has an emphasis on the present.
 - a. Jesus offers comfort—now—for troubled or broken hearts.
 - b. And we are not just to be recipients—we are to be givers.
 - c. He says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
 - d. Evidence of love is linked to obedience and service.
 - e. He speaks of ways that he—and we—can offer life and hope.

III. WE FIND LIFE IN BEING LOVED AND IN LOVING.

- A. Jesus shows his love of God by being obedient, and it is by our obedience that we must show our love as well.
 1. Love is a verb—and love without actions is dead.
 2. As we love, we become more aware of God’s love for us.
- B. A pastor tells about a woman in his congregation.
 1. She confessed to him that for many years she had been angry, sarcastic, envious, cynical about life—and just plain mean.
 2. She stopped praying—and blamed God for her lousy life.
 3. Then, surprisingly, love broke through her bitterness.
 4. A gentleman took an interest in her and they eventually married.
 5. She became transformed, radiant, filled with love and laughter.
 6. She said: “I really regret those years of despondency and bitterness; if I had only known how life was going to turn out.”
 7. Her story illustrates the transforming power of being in relationships where love is given and received.
- C. Someone said: “There are 10 steps to get over the blues.”
 1. “The first step is to love and help somebody else.”
 2. “Next, repeat step one...9 more times.”
- D. This concept is at the heart of all of the commandments.
 1. “Love God, and your neighbor, and yourself.”
 2. We find new life in loving and being loved.

IV. WE FIND IT IN HEARING AND SHARING THE TRUTH.

- A. Jesus says: “God will give you an Advocate to be with you forever, which is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive.”
- B. Someone noted some years ago that this teaching flies right in the face of the way too many people perceive faith.
 1. There are some who think that Christians are people who will not face facts—who live with unreal hopes and dreams.
 2. Is truth to be defined by what we can see, hear, taste, and feel?
 3. Or does God enable us to see things that others do not see?
- C. One person put it this way: “The point of Jesus’ saying is this. We can see only what we are fitted and equipped to see.”
 1. “An astronomer will see far more in the sky than most people.”
 2. “A botanist will see far more in a garden than most folks.”
 3. “Someone who understands a little about music will get far more out of a symphony than someone who understands nothing.”
 4. “What we see depends on what we bring to the experience.”
 5. “So, a person who has eliminated God never listens for God.”
 6. “We can find comfort in knowing that the Spirit of Truth can enable us to see God and life more clearly.”
- D. Some will look at the pandemic, the endless wars, the scandals, the politics, the silenced scientists, the denied data, leaders lying, the endless problems and cry out, “Where is God?”
 1. Yet people of faith see workers on the front lines, mediators who keep bringing leaders back to the table to pursue peace and justice, reformers who are trying to bring about change, and counselors who are trying to bring about healing...
 2. Those with the eyes to see cry out, “There is God!”
 3. And we get the privilege and pleasure of helping other people see.

V. WE FIND NEW LIFE IN THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE.

- A. Jesus says, "I will not leave you orphaned."
1. Your Bible might say "desolate" or "comfortless" or "helpless."
 2. "I will come to you; I am in God, you are in me, I am in you."
 3. In verse 23, he says an amazing thing: "Those who love me will keep my word, and God and I will make our home with them."
 4. The word "home" is the same as "abiding place" in verse 2.
 5. In other words, we not only have a future home in God; God comes to us in the present, now, to make a home in us!
- B. Think about it—what do our spirits really crave?
1. What are the things that truly bring meaning to our lives?
 2. As human beings, don't we long for intimacy, love, trust, peace, belonging, community, identity, safety, security, hope?
 3. Jesus speaks to the disciples'—and our—most basic fears and insecurities when he shares these words.
 4. We bring life to others when we serve through our presence.
- C. Well-respected counselor Wade Rowatt affirms these ideas.
1. He says: "As the anxiety builds during the pandemic, people wonder what to believe and are looking for ways to cope."
 2. He suggests: "Look for someone to help."
 - a. "Reach out to a family member or friend or neighbor in need and offer to bring groceries or pick up their medications."
 - b. "Remember those with little or no emotional reserves and make a sacrifice to share your 'loaves and fishes.'"
 - c. "Looking out for others will decrease our worries."
 3. He recommends forming new relationships.
 - a. "We can find new friends during this worldwide menace."
 - b. "Suffering together can bond us at a deeper level."
 - c. "Welcome other people into your circle."
 4. He also encourages us to practice our faith.
 - a. "Follow the habits and practices of your faith tradition."
 - b. "Stress can raise new questions about the world, God, and how the world works—especially for children and youth."
 - c. "Doubts can be a hole through which faith seeps away—or it can be a window through which new light shines."
 - d. "Listening and imagining with them makes a difference."
 - e. "Where do we turn when all else fails?"
 - f. "We turn to God and lean into our faith, hope and love."
 - g. He says: "May we all find peace in this new storm."
- D. So, I invite you to look for stories and examples of love in action.
1. It is so easy to get bogged down with bad and fake news.
 2. But God is working in and through countless people who are selflessly serving and giving and loving.
 3. People are stepping up—at church—and in the community and beyond!
- E. A local journalist asked for people to share positive stories in the midst of the pandemic—and the stories started pouring in.

1. One said: "If any senior citizens need someone to pick up their groceries or prescriptions I am more than willing to help!"
 2. "If you need someone to watch your kids for a few hours, run some errands, or help in any way I would like to help."
 3. Family Scholar House put out a plea on Facebook for diapers for the babies of the single parents they serve.
 - a. In less than 24 hours, the community came through.
 - b. They said: "We received over 1200 diapers, and our 117 diaper-wearing children will have dry, grateful little bottoms because of you."
 - c. "Thank you for hearing our call, responding with love and support, and reminding us that we are all in this together."
 4. "During this time of fear and uncertainty, when many are hunkered down, we also must offer up a helping hand."
 5. "This is when our compassionate community comes alive."
 6. "Yes, it's a pandemic—but we are finding gifts of kindness, those random acts of generosity by strangers, neighbors, loved ones, merchants and others who are making a difference."
 7. "When there is fear and uncertainty, we must stick together."
 8. He said: "Let's face it...we all could use some good news."
- F. And friends, we have heard some great news today!
1. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
 2. "I will never leave you alone, desolate, orphaned."
 3. "Because I live...you also will live!"
 4. "God and I will come to you...and make our home with you."
 5. God, Jesus, the Spirit...you and I...all of us...are in this together.
 6. Thanks be to God! Amen.