

Bible Study Guide: Week of 5-3-2021

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

John 15:9-17

[Jesus said:] ⁹“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

[Jesus said:] ⁹“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

It is unfortunate that the lectionary divides this passage from last week’s passage (John 15:1-8) because the two passages form a cohesive unit. Just as the branches are inseparable from the vine (as we saw last week in that passage), so these verses (15:1-17) are inseparable from each other. The love into which Jesus calls the disciples to live is the same love that the Father and Son have shared since the beginning. Remember, in John 1 we read that “The Word was with God and the Word was God.” This unity of the Father and Son is now made available to those in the world whom Jesus loves.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.

Jesus’ commandment is not just that his followers love one another, but that they love one another “as he has loved” them. In v. 13, he reminds the disciples of the extent of this love—he will literally lay down his life for them on the cross. By this point, he has already washed the disciples’ feet and commanded them to do the same for one another in order to show forth this same type of love.

The word translated here as “friends” is actually the Greek word *philos*, rooted in the Greek verb *phileo*—to love. Thus, our English translation as “friends” isn’t quite strong enough to capture what Jesus is saying here. He is referring to the disciples as those who are dearly beloved. Remember in John 1 we read that “To those who believed in [Jesus] he gave power to become children of God.” Here, Jesus says that he no longer calls them servants, but “loved ones/friends.” In John 20:17, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene to “go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” So Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection enables those who believe to become servants, friends, and indeed siblings of Jesus—children of God. The overarching theme of this chapter is that the unity Jesus and the Father share is now given to those whom Jesus calls also.

¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

Jesus reminds the disciples that they have been chosen and called by God, set apart to bear fruit. In this context, bearing fruit seems to mean doing acts of love and mercy in Jesus’ name. The love of God which caused Jesus to come to earth (see John 3:16) is now to be shared and spread by and among the community of believers whom Jesus has called. All of his words here are spoken to bring this about.

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

- 1. (How) does it change the meaning of this passage to read it along with last week's gospel lesson (15:1-8)?**
- 2. What does joy mean to you? What does it mean for our joy to be complete?**
- 3. What do you think Jesus means by saying we will bear "fruit that will last"?**