

May 2, 2010
5 Easter

Acts 11:1-18
Psalm 148
Revelations 21:1-6
John 13:31-35

May the words of my mouth and the secret meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer. AMEN

When Jesus was asked about the great commandment, he said.
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and with all your mind. And a second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

So we are to love God.
With all that we are..Our feelings,
Our reason, and our souls.. or maybe

you think of that part as spirit; That mysterious part of us that connects us with God, and with others.

And how do we manage that? Because God first loved us, with a love that is immeasurable as we read in the Morning Prayer General Thanksgiving.

Have you ever filled a cup or a glass without paying attention.. and it overflows.. That is like God's love.

God's love does not just fill us, but fills us to overflowing, if only we allow it.

Remember the story Jesus told of the son, who asked for his inheritance before his father was dead, and spent it in riotous living? When he had nothing to eat except food fit for hogs, he came to his senses and returned home to 'work for his father as a slave'.

But the father, rushed out to meet him, (notice this.. had been watching for him and rushed out to hug him) to welcome him home; then he arranged for him to have clothing worthy of a son, and a welcome home party.

The father had been patiently waiting with immeasurable love for the son's return.

Or the father's patient conversation with the angry son who had been faithful.. 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.'

Or remember the story of the lost sheep who strayed away from the flock. In this instance the 'shepherd' did not wait for the stray to return. The shepherd made sure the 99 were safely enclosed while he went out searching for the lost sheep, came home and got together with friends to rejoice that the sheep

that was lost was found, back in the fold, safe once again.

In this story, the shepherd with immeasurable love went looking for the stray.

So Jesus did his best to help us understand what love God has for us.

In our first reading, Peter had a special experience about love.

Peter, a faithful Jew, who followed the kosher rules of his faith, even as he followed Jesus, believed that only Jews could become followers of Jesus. First they needed to accept the Jewish way, then they could take the next step and become followers of 'The Way' the early name for Christians'

But God's love is not limited.

Peter dreamed that a net was let down, filled with all the animals that were not kosher. A voice told him to “kill and eat”. Peter’s Answer was “By no means Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth”.

Peter was proud that he had always keep the kosher rule.. but apparently God was asking him to recognize that “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.”

And in the dream, this challenge to accept that everything that God creates is acceptable to God. The dream repeated the challenge three times.

I remember my Clinical Pastoral Education Mentor reminding me.. if I heard something three times, I had better take notice.

And Peter took notice. When three men came to him from Caesarea, Peter listened to

the Spirit, and went with them. As Peter began to ‘teach’ the Holy Spirit fell upon these people, people that previously Peter had believed unacceptable.

And they praised God for they realized God had given even to the non Jews the divine gift of being able to turn to the truth, the gift that leads to eternal life.

God’s immeasurable love, available to all that God has created; creates.

John in his Revelation asks us to envision the new heaven, since the old one has passed away. In this place, new things are happening, God’s place is among us, and for those of us who thirst for God, the gift is water from the spring of the water of life.

God’s immeasurable love is available to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

But in the gospel we read first that Jesus warns the disciples that where he is going they cannot YET follow.

They must live in the in-between time.. the time of the world remembered, the history of who they were, their everyday experiences with Jesus, and the new world after the resurrection, of being with the Father, the glory of the new heaven, everlasting life.

As we wait for our future, we live in an in-between time.. remembering our history, And looking forward to our unknown, Un-explored future.

But before Jesus went to his crucifixion, he gave us a NEW commandment. Not just the one we read as part of the Great Commandment.. Not just to love our neighbors as ourselves..

A NEW COMMANDMENT

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

Jesus was talking about the immeasurable love that he had for us, in dying for us, that God has for us.. that to the best of our ability, we are to share that with everyone.

We have just sung.. “Here in Christ we gather, Christ our Love is with us”

The refrain.. “God is love, and where true love is, God himself is there.”

If we allow it, God’s immeasurable love will fill us to overflowing.. each of us as individuals, and to us as the community of St. John’s.

We like Peter will understand that no one that God creates is unclean, or profane.

Let us pray that we will allow God to fill us with his love to overflowing.. Then true love will radiate from us, and everyone will understand, will know that 'God himself' is here and St. John's will be a blessing to all who come here.