

6th Sunday of Easter 2018 - John 15:9-17

"Dearest Jimmy, the letter said. No words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you'll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you! Yours forever, Marie... P.S. And congratulations on winning the \$20 million state lottery.

Jesus gives us a commandment in today's gospel, and it is not an easy one. We are to love one another as He has loved us. Now loving others in general is a noble and beautiful ideal. But loving particular people can be a challenge.

When someone irritates us at work or at school or in our family, loving that person seems **unreasonable**. When someone ignores us or hurts us, loving that person can seem impossible. So, it is understandable that we try to wiggle out of Jesus' command.

We say to ourselves, "That person is selfish or manipulative. That person does not deserve to be loved." But Jesus has anticipated our objection and shaped his command accordingly. He says, "Love one another as I have loved you."

And how has Jesus loved us? He has loved us even though we at times are selfish and manipulative. He has loved us even though we do not deserve His love. So, Jesus gives us no room to escape from His command. We are to love others, even though they do not deserve to be loved.

So how do we pull off this seemingly impossible way of loving? Again, Jesus shows us the way. In the gospel, before He gives us the command, He shows us how we can follow it.

Before He tells us to **give** love, He tells us to **take** love. And the love that we are to take is Jesus' own. He says, "Remain in my love. Then my joy will be yours, and your joy will be complete."

Jesus is telling us that we must first take His love in order to give love to others.

Now what does it mean to **remain** in Jesus' love? It means that we are to remember and to embrace all the ways that He has loved us.

Jesus has loved us by giving us life, by giving us abilities, and by giving us family and friends. Jesus has loved us by walking with us on those difficult days when we struggle to hope.

Jesus has loved us by giving us the wisdom to make good decisions and the strength to carry them out. In all these ways and more Jesus has loved us.

And when we remember all those blessings, we **remain** in His love. Once we remain in His love, we are able to follow His command. Surrounded by the love that we have received from Him, we are able to love others, even though they may not deserve it.

So, do not despair when Jesus asks you to love someone who has hurt you or someone who annoys you. First surround yourself with His love.

Draw strength from the love you have received from Him, and then try to love someone who is difficult. If we try to love based on our own love, we will often not succeed.

But if we draw strength from Jesus' love, we may find that it is possible to accept the people who irritate us and to forgive those who have hurt us.

Jesus says, "Love one another as I have loved you." AMEN.