

## **Easter 6b St Margaret's May 6<sup>th</sup> 2018**

Preacher & Presider            The Rev'd Ron Gordon

Liturgist                         Dorothy Gordon

Reader                          Marj Hookey

### **THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE**

Greeting: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you**

Collect : Let us pray ...

Please stand and sing as the Bible is carried into the church.

Hymn 152 Joyful, joyful, we adore you

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

### **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

Early Word -

Psalm 98

**Come, Sing a new song to God,  
For he has done wonderful things! .....**  
**every country on earth shall see what God is doing.  
Join the celebrations everyone, shout and sing for joy!  
Praise God with the guitar;  
add your voice to the strings.  
Join in with the trumpet and drums  
till a joyful noise greets our King.  
Let the sea roar and everything in it,  
the land and everything on it,  
Come on, rivers, clap your hands,  
and you mountains, join the choir!**

Hymn 229 Jesus loves me

## Epistle - 1 John 5: 1-16

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

## Gospel - John 15: 9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have 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. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I 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. You 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. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

For the Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

Sermon

### **John 15:14 "You are my friends" - Rev Ron Gordon**

1. To be a friend of Jesus means to be loved and chosen.

Some words which leap out at us from the reading from John's Gospel this morning are friend, love, joy and command. We know that the word 'friend' can cover a host of relationships, from a nodding acquaintance to someone who shares your life and

fortune. A friend can be a person who helps make you, or even break you. David Beswick points out that “friendship cannot flourish without freedom in a relationship. In good mature friendships there is a mutuality of respect in which no one is enslaved or overly dependent on the other.

Whether friends are equal in status, or in age or whatever, is not the main point: their relationship is governed by mutual confidence in the care they have for each other.”

The Bible tells us that Moses and Abraham were regarded as ‘friends of God’: In Exodus (33:11) we read ‘Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp.’”

And in Isaiah (41:8) we read: “But you, Israel, my servant Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham my friend”.

Now in John’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that they are no longer in the master/servant roles, as rabbis were with their disciples. “I do not call you servants any longer...but I have called you friends..” (vs15) And he does this because of his love for them. He is still their leader, their Lord and Master, but their relationship is one of mutual care and respect for each other. There is no suggestion of equality.

Jesus knew that his disciples had disputes on who was most important

among them. In order to teach them about service, he acted as a slave to wash their feet at the supper table. He is the Lord who serves, telling them they ought also to wash one another’s feet. The basis of this friendship of Jesus is his love: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love”.

‘Love’ is also a problematical word for us. We use it to express and to hide so many meanings. Bruce Prewer suggests that when we say ‘God is love’, it sounds rather static, and we need a more dynamic expression like ‘God is loving’, <present continuous> He says” “God actively loves us all the time. Love is only known through action. It is not a

substance like water or an abstract concept like perfection. The love of God is an all embracing activity, the love of Christ is saving activity, the love of the Spirit is enabling activity.”

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Words that are carved into stone as a kind of universal truth at the very heart of our Shrine of Remembrance. They were spoken by Jesus to his few friends in the hours just before he was betrayed. They always have a significance not easily expressed, but engraved on our hearts in memory of all who have served and protected us, beginning with the one we call ‘ THE Saviour’. Jesus offered himself as the meaning and model of love: his readiness to obey the will of his Father in heaven and his willingness to suffer danger and death for his friends.

2. To be a friend of Jesus means to know what is going on.

I 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 I have heard from my Father. (vs16)

a. While the Gospels tell us that Jesus had great difficulty in sharing his mission with his disciples, at this point he tells them that they know what is happening. Masters did not tell their servants much more than was necessary for them to do their duties. Unless they were also friends, as some were, there was no need.

They only needed their instructions for their daily work. Jesus says his friends are in on the long term secret. They have been told, just as friends share information and plans, hopes and fears.

Bruce Prewer has a list of what he calls ‘Loving Jesus-style’ that is, things Jesus has already told his friends about loving behaviour: (you can find them all in the Gospels)

Challenging corruption and deceits.

Caring for the welfare of our enemies.

Lending without expecting to be repaid,

Forgiving seventy times seven those who hurt us,

Turning the other cheek.

Giving without wanting gratitude or praise,

Confronting with naked honesty the hypocrisies of religion.

Expressing anger when one’s fellows are being exploited,

Embracing outcasts and welcoming sinners,

Accepting that in some circumstances misunderstanding will be our lot.

That rejection and suffering may be the only apparent result of our holiest efforts.

b. “You did not choose me but I chose you...(vs16) William Temple in an age before our current excessive individualism, commented, “That is fundamental. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us (1John 4:10) He wrote: “Those of us who were baptized as infants are without excuse if we forget this. Our being Christians is no doing of ours...it is something

done to us and for us, not by us, though we have to make appropriate response in the form of obedience prompted by love” (p.258)

Nor does our election as friends of Jesus, while it gives us the assurance of God’s loving care for us, does not give us any sense of pride or elitism. Certainly Christians are special, for we are members through Christ in a unique family whose chief interest is in extending that family to include all people in the kingdom of God’s love. That is our mission, the task to which Jesus commissions and sends us, to bear fruit, fruit that will last (vs16).

c. This choice of his friends by Jesus provides great staying power when the task of bearing fruit becomes difficult. We are aware that there are forces today which are making it increasingly difficult to maintain churches, let alone provide the energy for mission. Maybe the two should be seen as one task, ie, ‘bearing fruit’, with worship, service and mission all being one activity. To know that we are friends of Jesus (“What a friend we have in Jesus”) should provide us with the incentive and the energy to endure. “Our fears and failures do not shake the electing hand that sustains.” (TfPp.325)

3. To be a friend of Jesus means to keep his commandment.

This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you (vs12)

It is at this point that people begin arguing that one cannot be commanded to love. Which is true enough. Love cannot be demanded or commanded. Love is the response to love. To treat the commandment of Jesus as if it is a law is to misunderstand John.

He is not suggesting that this is a commandment like those of the Old Testament. It is not a refinement of the Law. (As in Matthew 22:36) He is suggesting that this is a directive within the circle of his friends. Or it is the script, received from God, by which Jesus lives and dies. His love is the model on which his followers base their living.

There is a great temptation to think that 'love' is a soft, pliable, easily manipulated, easily side-tracked affection. You can see that on every TV channel every night if you are looking for it. There are those who prey on others on that basis, and unfortunately become criminals through their exploitation of others. The readings in the First Letter of John over the past few weeks have told us that loving is not a matter of words, but of deeds. That is where the love of Jesus for us outshines all other love. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. (vss13,14)

Bruce Prewer speaks of the "titanium" in the loving of Jesus. Titanium is a metal element that hardens steel. The result is that it is stronger and endures longer. That is how Jesus loves us, to the death of the cross. That is the kind of love Paul writes about in 1 Cor.13. He is writing specifically about the love of God in Jesus our Lord, the love that will never end, the greatest thing in all the world.

We should also note where John's Gospel goes later in Chapter 15 and into 16. The scene turns from friendship and loving to the opposite, to hatred, persecution and death simply because they are his friends.

Bruce Prewer for the past several decades through his parishes in Victoria and South Australia, through his books on prayer and on Australia, and his use of the world wide web, has enriched many lives, including preachers through his excellent and imaginative

resources, is now very unwell in a nursing home. I want to say:  
Thanks be to God for Bruce.

He wrote:

“With Jesus we get to the crux of loving. I chose that word ‘crux’ (cross) deliberately, for it is the sacrifice of Jesus that has given us two millennia later, that word ‘crux’ The whole of the life of Jesus displays love for us; this reaches its climax on the cross. There he is crucified, still forgiving his enemies and full of compassion for those around him. This is ultimate loving. This is what it means to be Divine. It is also what it means to be fully human.

This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you.

Prayer: Loving Friend, we admit that we rarely achieve your quality of unconditional love for our sisters and brothers in the community of faith. Unlike you, we are short on patience and thin on empathy. We tire too easily and tend to opt out of relationships rather than work through difficulties.

This is the truth about us, God. Please do not allow that truth to depress our spirits and further inhibit our love. Rather give us a hearty trust in your forgiving grace and renewal. Keep us humble enough to take small steps in the art of loving, to celebrate modest victories, to encourage one another, and to never despise the small achievements of other Christians or of ourselves. For your love’s sake.” Amen

### **RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE**

Hymn 640 Kneels at the feet of his friends  
Offering  
Dedication prayer and Journey song  
Congregational life  
Prayers of the people

Children's "Show and Tell"

**THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you**

Hymn 525 You we praise, High Priest and Victim

**INVITATION**

**GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you. Response **And also with you**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise .....**

We rejoice with all that you have made,

as we join the company of heaven in their song.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the**

**highest. Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

To Adam and Eve.....

Through him, in him and because of him,

we affirm the Church's faith

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

.....we worship you in joyful song:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power**

**are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

### **THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

Let us receive what we are;  
let us become what we receive.  
**the body of Christ.**

### **LAMB OF GOD**

Jesus, Lamb of God,  
**have mercy on us.**

Jesus, bearer of our sins,  
**have mercy on us.**

Jesus, redeemer of the world,  
**grant us peace.**

### **THE COMMUNION**

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

### **THE SENDING OUT OF THE PEOPLE**

Hymn 531 Sent forth by God's blessing

Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Hymn 650 Brother, sister, let me serve you