

Sunday, April 24, 2016

Acts 11:1-18

John 13:31-38

Go and Make Disciples in Love

{Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Jesus is alive and is worthy of all our praise, joy time and life! And because Jesus is alive we have a church in which we may gather to grow in relationship with the Risen Christ and with each other. Throughout this season of Easter we will focus on the 5 purposes of the church and our focus today is “Go and Make Disciples in Love” .}

Have you ever been working on a task that you started a while back and remembered something else that needed to be done right away? Or maybe you normally multi-task and yet needed to remind yourself of a specific duty you absolutely needed to do and put off as long as possible? This could be because you were unsure of what needed to be done or that you were simply running out of time.

It seems that Jesus was running out of time and he still had so much to teach the disciples and it seemed that they just did not get what was going to happen to him or that he really is the Son of God. Our gospel reading takes place just after Judas had left the disciples during that Last Supper. Jesus continued to teach them that he is the Son of Man and what was going to happen soon. He told them that he would be with them for only a little longer and then he would leave. Where he is going they could not go but they wanted to know where he was going but in answering Peter, Jesus said you cannot follow me now but later you can. Peter wanted to follow him wherever it was that Jesus was going right then, but when asked by Jesus, “Will you really lay down your life for me?” Peter hesitated and then Jesus told him that he would even deny knowing him.

But in this discussion of Jesus being the Son of Man and Peter being told that he would deny Jesus, our Saviour, teaches them a new command. In the midst of the story which leads to Jesus’ death on the cross, Jesus is still teaching and commanding them to do something. In the time between eating and sharing with his disciples and when Jesus goes to pray and ultimately be put under arrest, Jesus teaches and talks and tries to comfort these people who have been closest to him. And so he offers a new command.

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men (and women) will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. It seems simple enough --- love one another.

As a church we are to worship God, share in ministry with others and we are to communicate God's Word, by being ambassadors of Christ and spreading Christ's command to love. We are to love others as we are going to out to make disciples. That is we are to tell the whole world of Christ's coming, his death, resurrection and the promise to return. We're not to leave anyone out but include everyone; for as long as there is one person in the world who does not know Christ, the church has a mandate to keep growing. We are to love that is to care enough to love them so that to sharing the good news of Jesus- life, death and resurrection is easy and received

But how do we love others and why? Some years ago, Dr. Karl Menninger, noted doctor and psychologist, was seeking the cause of many of his patients' ills. One day he called in his clinical staff and proceeded to unfold a plan for developing, in his clinic, an atmosphere of creative love. All patients were to be given large quantities of love; no unloving attitudes were to be displayed in the presence of the patients, and all nurses and doctors were to go about their work in and out of the various rooms with a loving attitude. At the end of six months, the time spent by patients in the institution was cut in half.

Today our church family is celebrating the birthday of its oldest member in Mervin. Mervin has been a member of Glenwood Church for just a couple of years now and formerly was a member of Lincoln Road United. Mervin comes most weeks and it is just great to be able to celebrate your birthday with you. 100 years- wow!—Just to think—he was born in the middle of WW1 and was a boy at the time the United Church of Canada came into existence. We love you Mervin and we rejoice that you have chosen to love us here at Glenwood! For love is a choice that we can decide to receive and accept. But we must listen, observe and watch and see what God calls us to.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples to go and make disciples establishing one of the purposes of the church. Peter did this and of course some people complained. They complained because Peter had also included Gentiles who had receive the word of God and baptized them. Peter

explained everything to them precisely as it had happened in his vision. His vision was of a sheet which descended from heaven and it carried 4-footed animals of the earth wild beasts, reptiles, birds of the air. Then he heard a voice which told him to kill and eat.

Peter responded to the voice and said that nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth. However the voice answered again and said, “Don’t call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened 3 times and then pulled back up to heaven.

What did this vision mean? Peter explained that the Spirit told him to have no hesitation about going with them. The Holy Spirit came upon those where he was visiting and they were baptized by Peter. Peter explained further that God had given them the same gift as he gave the disciples who believed in Jesus, he could not oppose God. This now meant that God granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life. This meant that God’s love was not limited to the faith of the disciples but everyone who listened to Christ’s teachings and love and in hearing of his death and resurrection all could be saved in love.

All could be saved in love.

There are many ways for these stories to connect- Earth Day was Friday and God created this world and everything in it and it was good. Nothing was unclean or impure; all which God made was good. Peter is given the vision to reflect that all creatures God are good and all may be consumed as people have dominion over this creation. Yet we also understand Peter’s vision to show us that we are called to make disciples of all people—wherever they are, wherever they come from and wherever they call home...including our friend Dale, who does not call Windsor home, but calls Glenwood his Windsor church family his home away from home. And now that he will soon retire we will miss him for he is a part of this church family and is loved.

Each person who worships and serves and shares here at Glenwood is loved for each one of us is a child of God, called to love one another. And how we share this love is up to us because it is a choice we each need to make. But know this for sure- you are loved now it is up to us to love others in return.

A teenage boy was asked to read stories to his little sister. However, the boy grew tired of reading stories to her and so decided to record several of her favourite stories and eventually put them into her MP3. The big brother said, Now you can hear stories anytime you want. Isn't that great?

The little girl, looked at her big brother, looked at the MP3 player and ear buds he had purchased for her and just stared. No. I don't think it is great at all.

Why not? The brother asked. She answered," There is no lap to sit on when I hear the story." The boy was surprised at this and simply grabbed a book and started reading but with a different attitude—not a chore, but out of love!

As a church we are called to make disciples with the people enter these doors. We are also called to go and tell the good news of Jesus that all are welcome as we worship and praise God our Creator. And we are to do this following Jesus' command to love one another as he showed us how to love.

Let us remember this as we share our love of Christ Jesus with others. Let us share the joy we can experience in knowing others and loving them as Jesus commands. Let us pray:

Holy God we praise you for your gift to us in Jesus who calls us to love each other. We have chosen to follow Christ and so we ask that you would show us your love as we share with each other. Love is a choice O God and because we believe in Christ we choose to love. Thank you God. Amen. how to love.