

Sunday, May 6, 2018

I John 5:1-6
John 15:9-17

All are Loved by God

For many years when our family watched Sesame Street I always enjoyed the song "One of these Things" because the tune was catchy but mostly the answer seemed so obvious I thought why are they doing this segment? Big Bird will show you what I mean. (Big Bird- One of these Things- Bird Seed) video! (VIDEO HERE)

Well I hope you guessed correctly! It might have been a bit tricky because bird seed was in all of the bowls. But with Big Bird's explanation do we really understand better what is different! I'm not so sure! After all, it sure would take a lot of bird seed to really feed Big Bird.

And this is what our focus is today: what do we as a group of people who have gathered together in this place have in common and what is different?

Many of you might remember doing arithmetic and specifically working with fractions. When you are shown a random group of fractions, the rules to do this work is to first find the number that is common to all of them. Once you have that number the divisor figured out, then you can find the common denominator. The next step is to convert all the fractions to the same bottom number in order to add or subtract the fractions as required. As long as we maintain the same ratio between the top number and bottom number (numerator/denominator) the fractions are not changed in value and we can proceed with finding the end value or the answer.

However if you are to look to your right and then to your left, behind and in front of you to the people around you, you might wonder what we all have in common.

For the choir members and our guest vocalists today- they have a common connection- they love to sing as a group and specifically to hear special harmony being shared. For families who are here it is because the church is the only place where the entire family is welcomed to come- and I am not defining what a family is because the nuclear family has changed over the last 20-30 years. But you come as a family= of one or more individuals and you sit sometimes in the same place as you have since you first came to Glenwood Church for this is your space, your familiar place amongst the group of people we call the church.

But there are other reasons why you are here- you have come because you wanted to meet new people in recent weeks, or even when the church first opened. You come because someone smiled and made you feel welcome to be here and at some point what drew you to Glenwood Church is the Spirit of God moving in our midst. What are the differences we have amongst us? way to many distinctions but what is the strongest connection is what might be

termed as our common denominator is love. We are here because we love- we love those in our immediate families, we love the person who smiled at us and we don't know their names and we love the people who have become friends through the years. And when things happen in the lives of our friends our church family, we truly show and share this love.

This past week has been difficult for our church family—we celebrated the lives of three of our members who when they were able were active and contributing members to the ministry of this church. Our fourth family member who died on Thursday was beloved because he shared his love by just being faithful to this church each week as he worshiped God at his age and we will celebrate his life later on. . We have loved and we have lost good faithful people but we have not lost them forever—they are waiting for us in God's heaven. For this is what we hold most in common—we are disciples of Jesus Christ who strive to live out our faith in love not only on Sunday mornings but every day of the week. We are faithful followers of Jesus whose command was clear and precise as he spoke to his disciples sitting at the table prior to his arrest and trial. Jesus' command was clear: Love each other.

Jesus didn't say how or under which circumstances – but clearly stated, Love each other. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. Jesus said that they are his friends if they would do this- love each other.

From John's gospel we find that the common denominator that underlies the whole of life is love. For when we are motivated by love, all else in life falls into line. Jesus was motivated by God the Father out of love and for love. We read in John 3 that God loved the world so much that Jesus His Son was sent to save the people from their sins. Out of love, for love, by love in love this is how we are to connect—loving each other. This is what we have most in common- the love of God, His Son Jesus and the Spirit that calls us and moves us to become one Jesus followed his Father's wishes to live to die to rise again all for the sake of others- people of that time and for the generations which followed and continue to live and die in what we call life's cycle.

Love- is what motivates us. Not like—Facebook has you sign up to connect with other people and companies by 'liking' them. Yet it is love that moves us. Think about when we first meet someone—we are like idiots wondering if he/she 'likes' us and likes us more than others. And yet when true feelings are shared between two people—the one who says I love you first—lets it out like bait- until there is a response of some sort. This is love.

How do we live out the love that Christ commands? By not seeing the differences amongst God's people- but truly seeing what we have in common. Not emphasizing the fact that we have differences of opinion about every political leader or matter in the world right now, but

sharing the love we have in Jesus Christ. Not by sharing the distinctions of what makes us unique but what we have in common. Not by dwelling on our discrepancies but sharing what it means to walk with someone who is in need of the basic necessities of life and that someone cares.

Jesus is the reason we are here this morning. We are here because this place is our sanctuary which has been set aside for the purpose of worshiping God- Father Son and Spirit. We are here as disciples of Jesus to grow in faith and to learn how we are able to love others. Yes we have come together because we are grieving the deaths of our church family members. Yes we are celebrating new life after experiencing the baptism of one of the infants last week, Yes we are rejoicing that Jesus is alive just like we first shared again on Easter Sunday, but what we are doing in all of this is saying. I love Jesus and so do you. This is what we have in common. With our vocal guests here today- for you are offering your gifts of music to God in joyful song. Thank you. And because we are here now – we are bound together because we are worshiping Christ Jesus as one. We are friends- brothers and sisters in the Christ whose Spirit has touched us all. What we have in common cannot be broken if we truly believe in Jesus and want to live our lives following his command to love.

This was the one thing that Jesus knew was vital as he taught the disciples before his death. He went so far as to phrase it as a command: love each other. As followers, believers, disciples and brothers and sisters of Jesus we are to love one another, cherish one another, even lay down our lives for one another if need be, and it is all an extension of being a branch on Jesus the true vine. Jesus knew that if we could do just this one commandment, everything else would follow. Maybe this is what is missing in our world? To truly love each other!

Just think about this for a moment. If you bring a child to get an ice cream cone, you usually do not need to start issuing rules which insist that the child order a cone, eat it, enjoy it, find it delicious, and so just generally have fun! For what is accepted is that once the child gets to the ice cream store, the rest follows. So it is also with love: if we can't love, nothing else will work, either. If we can, the rest follows because all are loved by God. And we are called to love each other.

I share with you this little song which has so much meaning—

I love you with the love of the Lord,

Yes, I love you with the love of the Lord;

I can see in you the glory of my king,

Yes, I love you with the love of the Lord..