

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Below are the reading and sermon for Sunday June 28, 2020. I hope they have reached you in good health and the Spirit of the Lord. Words cannot express how much I desire for us to be together in worship again.

In Christ's Peace,

Pastor Steve

Readings

1 John 4:7-21

God Is Love

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Gospel

John 15:9-11

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.

Sermon

Can't we all just get along! We've all said it.

The world needs a hug. The world needs a redo. The world needs to return to love, the building blocks of all there is. The world needs God, needs love.

God is Love. This is the starting point, love. A supreme being moved over nothing and was moved to make something. The mere act of designing symbiosis/interconnectedness between everything the supreme being created is a nod to intention, to good intention. Harmony between land, sea and sky. Water cycle. Volcanoes way back in the day responsible for one of the first actions toward the creation of our atmosphere. Moons and tidal pools. 93 million miles from the sun being the sweet spot for life on earth as we know it for all of this to be sustained. How awesome and beautiful is that! In the book of Genesis Moses named the processes as taking days. What a day is to God may have actually taken eons, millenia. We don't know. The scientific record suggests billions of years. Ok, we are good with that. The length of time, not as important as the time God spent setting into motion all these processes that created life.

Days 1-5 were all about God preparing the housing into which humans would be placed on day 6. God wanted it to be just right. God wanted the living conditions for all systems to be interconnected, harmonious, in good working order. Day 6, time to add the people. Again, it was good. Life was flowing. It would continue uninterrupted without any wrong. Not until the first initial offering of freewill to Adam and Eve did humanity know what absence from

the source of life was. Adam and Eve had the house that God built. They had each other. And now they have this unique gift of self-determination before them. God told them, *you can have all that is good, and trust that all I have provided you is all you need to know and have, or you can want more. More is out there. It hangs from that tree over there. Don't eat its fruit. More is less, and you will know death. Don't consume what is not good for you.* You know the rest of the story...

The goodness of life had been compromised. Before there was life as God created it, there was nothing. Not even death. Here begins the fall. Here begins the interconnected, unharmonious, disjointed creation God created for us to be housed in. Ever since, our God of good intentions has worked at getting the house back in order. Our God, the source of all life, healing and forgiveness works tirelessly at restoring love in us. Has never stopped. God patterned what it is to forgive and says to the redeemed, *Go! Live!*

The apex of God's pursuit of us being the life, death and resurrection of God's only son Jesus Christ. That is love. That **is** God.

Today's passage from 1 John thoroughly exhausts love as being precisely what God is. Know God, and know Love. Give love, receive love and know God. Know Jesus, and know God, and know love. You have heard me say more than once that life as God intended it is really this simple, *Love God and Love God's people.* Boiled down, in laymen's term if you will, Loving God and loving Gods people is the greatest commandment. The greatest and the hardest. Hardest because we are letting God abide in us. Which means our earthly self is asked to get out of the way. Biases rest aside so God may abide. Worries rest aside so God may abide. If we worry for nothing, than we have what we need. We don't

want more. We don't need more. We don't reach for and consume what gives us false senses of control. When we let go and let God, fears rest aside so God may abide. When God is abiding in us love pushes everything but what is good to the side.

When God is abiding in us we know how to approach adversity constructively. We are stronger together than apart. Paul reminds us that when one-part pf the body suffers, the whole body suffers. Love restores our functionality.

When Love is abiding in us we know how to listen to the needs of our brothers and sisters. We don't hear our internal voices of judgment, ridicule or condemnation, but instead hear Jesus' voice of love and compassion.

When God is abiding in us we do what is faithful, but what might not be popular, or well received. We love the unlovable. We love hurt, hate and pain in others to death.

When Love is abiding in us we seek to know more about what detracts from life from our brothers and sisters in Christ and ask God how am I to lend my heart and my hands, your hands to them?

And you know when the Love of God is abiding in you...because you have felt the power of reconciliation, of forgiving and being forgiven...and you know the power of having been healed of what was breaking you...because the God of life has worked the love of Jesus Christ right into you.

When God is abiding in us we take the time to be a part of repairing the house God created for us to dwell in.

When Love is abiding in us we focus on the good God is doing. When Love is abiding in us we look to consume the good fruit.

Couple days ago I got to working on a few things around the house. I was putzing about in the garage when I was joined by my youngest daughter Mara. Mara surveyed the scene and said, "Daddy, whatcha doing?" Before I could say anything, she said, "You working on the house?" Exasperated, I replied, "Yes baby, I am working on the house. The house will always need to be worked on", I told her. Mara is full of questions. That is an understatement. She sees me doing something, anything, and narrates what I am doing. She is really into figuring out processes. Every statement is followed by a, "right Dada?". Seeking affirmation that what she is seeing and interpreting is correct. On this day I am rearranging space in the garage. And in her usual fashion begins to tell me why I am rearranging the space as I am. Yes, the house will always need to be worked on.

Maybe it's because I am a man, but I want to fix it all! I want to name the process and seek affirmation of how to shift this world in God's direction. Like you, I want this third rock from the sun that houses us all to know a return to it's beautiful and intentional original design. At the moment I believe it to be a shadow of what God intended it to be. Despite us, it has not stopped God from seeking to redeem and restore us. Not at all. Jesus is proof positive to what extent God went to say to all of creation, "I love you. You are mine." There is no doubting the power of love. We know what love can build.

We know what love can fix. We know love has the ability to transform all matters bad into good. We know that love created all that there is seen and unseen in all the universe, therefore love can do anything.

What does *love* say to those who want monuments and statues to their oppressed and enslaved past taken down.

What does *love* say to those who angrily destroys property and purposefully hurts people. *Dear God, how are we to love/move these people? What is our role Lord?*

What does *love* say to those who have no respect for authority and whose purpose is me, myself and I? *Dear God, how are we to love/move these people in your direction? What is our role?*

What does *love* say to those who are responsible for policy that protects our health and well-being?

What does *love* say to those who are dishonest? *How are we to handle them Lord?*

The house is a mess. What are we to do? What would you have us say Lord? In what ways are we to Love your people? You set all that we know into motion, and did not go away ever. Your Spirit abides among us and in us. To whom shall we go? We are here. We are ready. Use us to create love in your name. Create in a clean heart oh lord and renew a right spirit within **us**. For the sake of the people of this nation, for the sake of the people of in this world. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ. Empower us to listen, speak, and advocate because your Holy Word tells us so. Help us do what is faithful to you. We are not afraid of a little housework. It builds character, your character in us, for your people. Amen.