

# Pastors Network

Church of the  
Lutheran  
Brethren

**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter** (Series B)

May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Gospel:** John 15:9-17

**Epistle:** 1 John 4:1-11

**Lesson:** Acts 11:19-30

**Psalm:** Psalm 98

## **CLB Commentary on the Gospel Text**

*by Dr. David Veum*

Verses 9 & 10 seem to introduce a whole new subject. Or is it an explanation of what it means to remain in the vine? Some strongly suggest that the paragraph break comes after verse 10 with the transitional line,  $\tau \alpha \upsilon \tau \alpha \lambda \epsilon \lambda \alpha \lambda \eta \kappa \alpha \upsilon \mu \iota \nu \iota \nu \alpha$ ....Likely so. The use of  $\mu \epsilon \nu \omega$  three times also suggests that these verses are an explanation of what it means to remain in the vine.

Jesus invites us to remain in his love after describing that love: “Even as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Is the next conditional statement descriptive or prescriptive? The essence of  $\tau \eta \rho \epsilon \omega$  and  $\epsilon \nu \tau \omicron \lambda \eta$  strongly suggests that it is more descriptive. As we guard and keep the precepts of Christ—the word of his grace, his desire for the world to know, loving him and others—we will remain in his love. We cannot stay in his love and reject these things.

In the new paragraph Jesus begins to comment on the analogy of the vine. His purpose in the analogy? That his joy might be in us and our joy might be full. If Tillich is right, then the fullness of our joy means that we find our fulfillment and life in Jesus Christ. He writes:

Joy has something within itself which is beyond joy and sorrow. This something is called blessedness....

...Blessedness is the eternal element in joy, that which makes it possible for joy to include in itself the sorrow out of which it arises, and which it takes into itself...

...This joy which has in itself the depth of blessedness is asked for and promised in the Bible. It preserves in itself its opposite, sorrow. It provides the foundation for happiness and pleasure. It is present in all levels of man’s striving for fulfillment. It consecrates and directs them. It does not diminish or weaken them. It does not take away the risks and dangers of the joy of life. It makes the joy of life possible in pleasure and pain, in happiness and unhappiness, in ecstasy and sorrow. Where there is joy, there is

fulfillment. And where there is fulfillment, there is joy. In fulfillment and joy the inner aim of life, the meaning of creation, and the end of salvation, are attained.

What follows, then, is a description of the source of this joy. He expects that we will love one another as a result of his loving us and laying down his life for us. Our love for one another, though imperfect and not redemptive or as sacrificial as his, will reflect his sacrificial love for us. How is this related to joy? If we are guarding his precept to love one another, then it means that we have learned to know this love and that his love is remaining in us. If we love one another as he has called us to love, then it means that we will have discovered and received the blessedness and fullness of his life, the life that flows into us from the Vine.

Now he expands the depth of his relationship with us. We are his friends. We are taken into his intimate circle. Here we see sanctification used in the wide sense. His love for us brought him to the cross where he laid down his life for us. In redeeming us he set us free from the condemnation and bondage of sin. Now his love works in us. His resurrected life flows into us. We actually begin to reflect his love. We are called his friends. He takes us into his confidence. He makes known the ways of the Father to us.

How did we get into such a relationship with God himself? He chose us. It is not our choice. It is not our keeping his precepts in a prescriptive way that earns us this friendship relationship and the fullness of joy. It is his choosing for the purpose that we might live out our connection to the Vine. Yet, we do not act as impassive branches. We actively ask the Father in the Name of the Jesus Christ, the Vine, for whatever we need in order to bear fruit.

What is the main theme of this paragraph, joy or love? Verse 17 provides a wrap-around with verse 12. If we think of joy as represented by the fruit of the vine, then verse 11 is the theme. It becomes the reality expressed in the first paragraph of the chapter in the analogy of fruit produced by remaining in the Vine. It begins with his love for us, vss 9-10. The redemptive love of Jesus Christ for us leads to the fruit of love for others in us. It leads to an ever deeper intimacy with him as he calls us friends. We will have the fullness of joy as we remain in his redemptive love, as we reflect that redeeming love in sacrificial love for others, and as we grow into an ever deeper love relationship with Christ as his intimate friends. There is only one disclaimer: this is his work. He has chosen us.