**17 May 2020 Sixth Sunday of Easter White**

**Readings:** Acts 17.22-31 1 Peter 3.13-22 **John 14.15-21**

**Opening Words**

We are the Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.

**There is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God, no height nor depth, no death nor life, no isolation nor social distancing, no virus nor scaremongering, no ill health nor anxiety, no riches nor debts, nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN!**

Roman's 28 amended Vanda Perrett

**Collect of the Day**

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

**Gospel John 14.15-21**

Jesus said to his disciples: 15‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. 17This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. 18I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’

**Reflection**

21They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’

How do we know love? A serious question for much of our sharing of our faith starts off with “God is love”, or that “God loves each one of us so much that he sent his Son to live, die and rise again for us”.

But what if you are told love means being manipulated? What if you know love to be an abuse of power and control? What if love for you is always conditional, and it is withdrawn at will or whim of the one who should love you? How then do we hear about the God of love?

Perhaps we must start with understanding what love is not, and the best way for me is to look at the stories of Jesus’ life.

Is love being manipulated? Jesus asks the blind man ‘what do you want me to do for you’ and so gives freedom of choice. Is it an abuse of power and control? Look to the way Jesus rails against the religious leaders for forgetting people not policies or politics or ritual comes first. Is love conditional on your good behaviour? Look at the story of the 10 lepers, only one – the Samaritan, came back to thank Jesus – all were healed.

The Street bible translated the great passage on love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 in a challenging way: *“What is love anyway? Not the tripe you’ve been force-fed! No, love gives people space and time; it does people good. It’s not jealous, loud-mouthed or big-headed. It’s not vulgar; it doesn’t look after Number 1. It’s not got a short fuse – it forgives and forgets. Love doesn’t smile when dark stuff goes on, but throws a party when the truth gets out. It protects more than a blockbuster hero; it trusts more than a toddler. It’s always positive; it always hangs in there. Love doesn’t let you down.”*

I don’t know about you, but I am not sure that I can keep this way of loving and being loved as something that is second nature – YET. But I hope to be able to do it someday. What happens while I learn how to do this, is that God shows me how – through the people around me now, through the holy scriptures, through the second, third, fiftieth chances I am given to get it right. And in all of my struggles to learn to love God, and to love to keep his commandments; (to love God, love neighbour and love self) I am given strength and hope when I remember “*love gives people space and time; it does people good… It’s always positive; it always hangs in there. Love doesn’t let you down.”* I can trust God who is Love will not let you or I down.

The thing with love is that once we know it, we experience it, then we can never be fooled into the tricks and manipulations that pretend to be love. What is love? As TS Elliot says in Little Gidding?   "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time." When we know God, we will know what love really is, and/or when we know what love really is then we shall know God. God is love.

**Prayers written by Brian Simpson**

Our Church buildings are closed, but we thank you, Lord, that the "Church online" is flourishing. We pray that the Easter message of hope and joy may be heard and understood as never before. In these strange and anxious times, we look to the promise of your life-giving spirit to inspire and strengthen the Church in communicating the offer of new beginnings which our world so desperately needs.

Spirit of hope **Inspire us.**

We pray for world governments and all who have the responsibility for protecting their peoples. Give them, Lord. the wisdom and courage to make the right decisions. Guide them to work in unity to benefit the lives of all. May we all work together to build a better future for everyone.

Spirit of hope **Inspire us.**

We pray for all the anxious, the suffering, the lonely, and the bereaved. May they feel your calming and healing presence We pray for all those who, prompted by your love, care for them, provide for their needs, and offer comfort where they can. We thank you for that loving sense of community which sustains us. We pray that you will work through our communities to forge a new togetherness in the days to come.

Spirit of hope **Inspire us.**

Lord of life, your love for us is so great and our love for you so small.

Thank you for accepting what we are able to offer

and ignite us to a blaze of love. (Susan Sayers 1999)

Merciful Father

**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son**

**our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

**Dear God,
Guard our friendships:
Encourage us, that we may encourage one another.
Inspire us, that we may inspire one another.
Strengthen us, that we may strengthen one another.
Remember us, that we may remember one another. Amen**

**May the peace of God which passes all understanding fill our hearts with love for you, dear Lord and Father of all, and may we know your blessing and be a blessing to others. Amen.**

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