

Sermon – May 14 2023 (Collect, songs, and readings are below).

I was visiting a woman in her final days of life. We had visited many times when she was not laying down. I remember times of tea in her apartment or picking blackberries together and I fondly remember her coming to my husband Dwight for her weekly after-service BIG HUG. Kay lived a long, good life – she had also suffered much as we all do in different ways. Kay’s body was getting ready to let her go – to be born again into her next life. She was transitioning from one way of living to another.

Kay slept a lot. One day when she opened her eyes and saw me, she whispered a few words. They weren’t just any old words – they were coming from a deeper place in her. These 6 little words came from her deepest self.

St. Catherine of Siena, who lived in the 1300’s, and is known as a Doctor of the Church for her nearly 400 letters, prayers and treatises which unified the church in her day says:

“Our DEEPEST SELF IS GOD” – this is the image of God within us – for in Christ we live and move and have our being.

Kay’s words to me in these final days were not simply ordinary English words – they were extra-ordinary. They came from her deepest self – so deep, I’m not sure she was even aware of how sacred they were to my heart. I hold this message so close. I can still hear and feel them now. Kay spoke directly into my heart and soul. These final words she was imparting were of utmost importance. I needed to hear, receive, and embrace them. They impacted me so greatly that they actually changed my life in some way.

It was as if Kay had one foot on earth in that hospice room – and one foot had already entered eternal glory. Part of her was here – and part was in heaven. She was speaking words of eternal life – words of God’s heart to mine. In this way God loved me through Kay and revealed God’s self to me.

Kay’s words were filled with light and hope and encouragement. I knew I was in her presence, but I recognized that I was also in the presence of another – whom I call Jesus who lived in her as she lived in him; for in him we live, move and have our being.

I wonder if you have experienced something like this – Pause – I wonder what last words someone may have spoken to you where you recognized something extra-ordinary was happening in those moments in that encounter with Love – with God’s presence at hand – I wonder why that might have been important and how it encouraged your life – perhaps even changed it in some way. Pause. Perhaps on Mother’s Day we can recall a word of life or a smile or gift of love that our mother’s gave to us – some still alive, others who live in the unseen real life beyond our seeing. I still receive the gift of Kay’s words to me and some things my own mom writes in cards or says to me – they are precious and bring me life. Please take a moment to remember, to receive a gift from your mother today – Pause. Let us give thanks for our Moms who always live in our hearts.

Today's text in the Gospel of John is the first of the 3 farewell discourses of Jesus – The final messages he shared before he ascended from this life after his post resurrection appearances on earth – He is preparing to go “back home” with God.

I think **Jesus' farewell words** might be important too. I think his words come from his Deepest Self – from God within. Jesus shares a few things that are closest to his heart with his friends/

I noticed 3 key things he spoke:

1. "If you love me, **keep my commandments**. He is encouraging his followers to listen and follow what he tells us to do – how to live - these are not just good ideas but clear wise directives to follow. They are words of life that change one's life – and change the world.
2. He kindly prepares him for a change about to happen – that he is going away but that **there is another Advocate coming** - the Spirit of truth, coming – you are not left orphaned; but that he is in his Father, and we are in him and he in us. We can not be separated. He lives within.
3. Third he repeats the first thing – so it must be important for our wellness. **Keep my commandments**. Do what I say for heavens sake because he says **I love you and will reveal myself to you.**"

How does Jesus reveal himself to them – and to us?

Let's drawn on Paul who sheds light on this for us today. He says that Christ's love is revealed in his suffering and death while on earth – and we read of his resurrection power that takes him to set people free below the earth.

“Christ suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey.”

Christ suffered to bring us to God – to show us Who God is and How God is – **the cross is not the price that Jesus had to pay to convince God to love us. It is simply where love will lead us.**

Christ, after death, went to the depths beneath the earth and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison who did not obey – I wonder what this reveals about Jesus and the depth of his love to go to these deep places to set people free? And he still does this today in us and in all – comes deep within and sets us free.

I wonder what he proclaimed to them? What did he say – what did he manifest to those in chains – maybe something like - Once you were dead – and now you are made alive – because I love you – my love sets you free. I do not leave you orphaned or abandoned. I live in you and you in me. **I reveal myself to you.**

In this way was he living out Isaiah 61: The spirit of the Lord God is upon him – God has anointed him and sent him to bring good news to the oppressed – to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty

to the captives and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the Lord's favor – to comfort and provide for those who mourn. Giving them a garland of life instead of the ashes of death. Was he proclaiming – I LOVE YOU! I have come not only to Earth to set all people free - but also to Under the Earth – to the underworld to set FREE - all imprisoned in darkness sin and despair. To all, everywhere.

Christ is relentless in this radical love – pursuing pursuing pursuing – us. The Good Shepherd who goes after even the last one who is lost.

This understanding of the crucifixion is much better than thinking of Jesus as paying some debt to an alienated God who needs to be appeased into loving us.

The Christian way is to love deeply and to keep growing in what it actually means to love.

"I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Just prior to Pentecost, which we will be celebrating in two weeks - Jesus reveals his love and reassures his friends that the brief separation will lead to a deeper mystical union and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

I invite us to an awareness of Christ's love to us today. To notice and receive Jesus revealing himself to us.

I invite you to place your hand on your heart.

If you want to, please repeat this little prayer, aloud or silently.

I am here. I am alive. There is Another who lives within me. His name is Jesus.

In him I live

and move

and have my being.

I am here. I am alive. There is Another who lives within me. His name is Jesus.

In him I live and move and have my being. Alleluia!

Opening Song: Come People of the Risen King
[Come, People Of The Risen King](#)

Song of Praise: How Great is Our God V1, C, V2, C, Bx2, Cx2 . [Chris Tomlin - How Great Is Our God \(Lyrics And Chords\)](#)

Gradual: CP 527 How Firm a Foundation V1 & 2 before, 3&4 after

Offertory: Hymn of Heaven V1, C2, V2, C1, V3, C1, C2, [Phil Wickham - Hymn Of Heaven \(Official Lyric Video\)](#)

Communion: A Thousand Hallelujah's V1, C, V2, C, Bx2, C, B, C
[Brooke Ligertwood - A Thousand Hallelujahs \(Live Video\)](#)

Closing Song: Because He Lives (Amen) V1, C, V2, C, B, Cx2, ending [Matt Maher - Because He Lives \(Amen\) \(\[Official Lyric Video\]\)](#)

May 14 6th Sunday of Easter

Faithful God,
 make our hearts bold with love for one another.
 Pour out your Spirit upon all people,
 so that we may live your justice
 and sing in praise the new song
 of your marvellous victory;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown God.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him - though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

ACTS 17:22-31

Psalm

REFRAIN Be joyful in God, all you lands.

Bless our God, you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard;

Who holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip. R

For you, O God, have proved us; you have tried us just as silver is tried.

You brought us into the snare; you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.

You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; but you brought us out into a place of refreshment. R

I will enter your house with burnt offerings and will pay you my vows, which I promised with my lips and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.

I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts with the smoke of rams; I will give you oxen and goats.

Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.

I called out to him with my mouth, and his praise was on my tongue.

If I had found evil in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me;

But in truth God has heard me; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his love from me. R
PSALM 66:7-18

Second Reading

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

1 PETER 3:13-22

Gospel

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO JOHN

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This 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. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They 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."

JOHN 14:15-21