“Living the Way of Love: Abide in Love”
Homily by Rev. Patricia Farris

I John 4:7-21
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 Savior 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 judgment, 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.

“Abide in my love,” Jesus says. “Abide” in my love. “Abide” is such a beautiful word, an old-timey word, we might say,  
which in fact comes from Old English roots. It means to remain, stay, dwell, lodge, continue, endure. It’s found throughout  
Scripture, often translated as remain and stay and so forth. Psalm 119: “Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast  
established the earth, and it abides.” In the prophet Isaiah, we hear of God’s deep desire to dwell in the midst of the  
people, God in-dwelling the new creation forever when all things are full of God’s glory. (Is. 6:3)

In the New Testament, the whole Gospel of John is very much about abiding. At the very beginning of his Gospel, John  
wrote that in Jesus, God comes to abide with us. The Word became flesh and lived among us. God with us. God present  
with us here in this life. God abiding with us. John 14: “In my Father’s house are many abiding-places.” I Corinthians:  
“Now faith, hope, and love abide, and the greatest of these is love.” And as we heard Larry read for us from I John  
earlier: “Those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them.”

As disciples come to understand, abiding is about being present to the presence of God in our  
midst wherever and everywhere we are. It’s about learning to trust that first; God loves us each and all. That no one is  
beyond the reach of God’s love. God creates us in love, nurtures us in love, walks our daily path with us in love. And so,  
we are to learn to abide in a loving relationship with God or as Bishop Ruben Job puts it: to stay in love with God.

To abide in God, to abide in God’s love, means to keep ourselves in close relationship with God. To talk with God in  
prayer. To praise God in worship. To serve God in service to God’s people, need to pay attention, to devote time and  
energy to our relationship with God.

As Jesus invites his disciples to abide in him, he’s inviting us into a lifetime of learning, practicing living the way of love.  
Sometimes failing. Sometimes getting it right. Always moving further along the way. Remaining, staying, continuing on.

For by God’s grace, “love abides.” That is, God gives us time. Maybe we’ve felt during this past year that God was  
giving us too much time?! But, through it all, God slowly crafts us into the people we are created to be, learning to be  
steadfast and faithful, drawing us into God’s own love, slowly and patiently, molding us into those who, by abiding in that  
love, come to know a love stronger and more steadfast than comes naturally to any of us. The God of love is the God who  
creates us for love, who redeems us through love, who sustains us by love, who sends us out to serve others in the power of  
love. The love that knows no limits, no boundaries, no color lines, no in-group/out-group. The love that draws the circle wide  
and never ends. The love that abides.
As we abide with Christ, we develop a spiritual depth that grounds us in God’s love and peace. The theologian Eberhard Arnold wrote in the 1930s, these words no less true in these pandemic times: “the great agitation in the world of today makes it more and more urgent to gain inner strength in those quiet encounters with Christ that make it possible for us to remain [abide.. in Christ]. Situated as we are in a world that is so terribly unpeaceful, we need constant nourishment for our inner life…our inner being needs daily the quiet haven of communion with God.”

“…the quiet haven of communion with God.” This morning, we experience again that timeless and limitless trajectory of God’s abiding love as we share together in the sacrament of holy communion, the sacrament that binds us to Jesus and to the church in every time and place. The deep bond of love between God and God’s people, known through Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, abiding across generations past and yet to come.

In this love we abide, now and forever and ever, Living the Way of Love.

Amen

Notes:

