



## *Breaking Open the Word*

### *Easter 6B*

6th May, 2024

St Peters by the Lake, Paynesville

The Rev'd Dennis Webster  
Rector

Acts 10.44–48

Psalm 98

1 John 5. –6

John 15.9-17

#### *The Joy of Abiding in Christ: A Journey, Not a Burden*

Today's reflection delves into the joy of abiding in Christ, underlining that obedience is a natural expression of love, not a burden. The reflection draws from 1 John 5:2-4 and John 15:9-17, emphasizing the intimate relationship Jesus offers us through obedience. It underscores that abiding in Christ leads to freedom, fruitfulness, and glorification of God, demonstrating the transformative power of Christ in our lives. The reflections main thrust is to encourage embracing obedience as a pathway to deeper intimacy with God, brimming with joy, love, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit.

\*As there is a guest preacher this Sunday, a shortened form of reflection is provided.\*

#### *The Joy of Abiding in Christ: A Journey, Not a Burden*

A beautiful paradox of our faith is that abiding in Christ is not a burdensome task but the essence of our daily walk as Christians. In our exploration, we'll draw wisdom from the words of the apostle John in 1 John 5:2-4 and John 15:9-17.

In 1 John 5:2-4, we read, "By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world."

At first glance, obeying commandments might sound daunting, like a heavy yoke we must carry. However, John assures us otherwise. He tells us that obeying his commandments becomes a natural outflow of that love when we love God. It's not a burdensome obligation but rather a joyful response to the love we've received from God.

This concept finds its most profound expression in the words of Jesus himself in John 15:9-17, where he speaks of abiding in his love. Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so have I 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."

Here, Jesus paints a vivid picture of the relationship between love and obedience. He invites us into a profound intimacy with him, likening it to the relationship between him and the Father. Just as he abides in the Father's love through obedience, so are we called to abide in his love through obedience.

However, notice the critical difference: Jesus doesn't present obedience as a burden but as a natural consequence of abiding in his love. He even calls us friends, disclosing everything the Father has made known to him. What an incredible privilege—to be friends of the Son of God, to share in his mission, and to bear fruit that will last!

So, what does it mean for us to abide in Christ? It means finding our home in his love, allowing his passion to permeate every aspect of our being—thoughts, words, and actions. It means aligning our will with his, walking in obedience to his commandments, not out of duty, but out of love.

When we abide in Christ, we find that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light, as he promised in Matthew 11:30. We discover that true freedom is not found in pursuing our desires but in surrendering to the will of our loving Saviour. We experience the joy of knowing that we are loved unconditionally, accepted entirely, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life that glorifies God.

So, let us embrace the journey of abiding in Christ with open hearts and willing spirits. Let us cast aside any notion of obedience as a burden and instead embrace it as the pathway to deeper intimacy with our Lord. As we abide in love, may we bear much fruit that will bring glory to our heavenly Father and witness the transforming power of Christ in our lives.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, God's love, and the Holy Spirit's fellowship be with us all. Amen.

## Ice Breaker



What's the funniest or most embarrassing thing ever happening to you during a family gathering or holiday celebration?

## Discussion Questions

How can we shift our perspective on obedience to see it as a joy rather than a burden? What practical steps can we take to make this shift in our daily lives?

Some see obedience as a natural outflow of our love for God rather than an obligation.

How can you shift your perspective on obedience in your walk with Christ?

What does it mean to abide in Christ's love, and how can we apply it daily?

Abiding in Christ means finding our home in his love, allowing his passion to fill every aspect of our lives, and aligning our will with his.

How can you practice abiding in Christ's love in your daily routines?

Why is the notion of being Jesus' friend crucial to understanding our relationship with Him?

Jesus calls us friends and shares everything the Father has made known to him, offering a profound intimacy in our relationship.

How can you develop a closer friendship with Jesus and experience his love?

Based on John 15:9- 17, how does abiding in Christ's love lead to bearing fruit in our lives?

As we abide in love, Jesus says that we will bear much fruit and bring glory to our heavenly Father, revealing the transformative power of Christ.

What areas of your life require God's transformative power, and how can you partner with him to bear fruit?

What does it mean to find true freedom through surrendering to the will of Jesus?

Freedom is not found in pursuing our desires but in surrendering to the will of our loving Saviour.

How can you practice surrendering your desires and decisions to Jesus in your everyday life?

### Prayer Points

- Ask for prayer requests
- Pray for God's help in abiding in divine love throughout the week
- Pray for the ability to align our will with his and walk in obedience out of love.
- Pray for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to bear fruit that brings glory to God.

Made with the assistance of church.tech, Adobe inDesign and the NRSV

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