

One in Love

Easter People: Part 4 “One in Love”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael –May 14, 2023

6th Sunday of Easter

Readings: 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21,25-27

Reflection: Psalm 66

Greeting: Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

Prayer: Lord of Life, submitting to death, you conquered the grave. By being lifted on a cross you draw all peoples to you. By being raised from the dead you restored to humanity all that we had lost through sin. Throughout these fifty days of Easter, we proclaim the marvelous mystery of death and resurrection. For all praise is yours, now and forever. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 66

Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, who has kept us among the living and has not let our feet slip. For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; you laid burdens on our backs; you let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place. I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will pay you my vows, those that my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatted calves, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me. I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has heard the words of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me. (Psalm 66:8-20 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 66 and hear of honoring God. That we lift up our praise for all that the Lord has done for us. That we can be thankful for God’s presence in our lives. That we should proclaim all that God is for us to those who will listen. How do you experience God in your daily life? Do you lift others up in prayer so that they can share in God’s blessings? How does Christ bring you comfort? How can we share that with those near to us? How can we come together and celebrate God’s incredible love? How has your life been changed because of Christ’s death and resurrection?

Prayer: O God, our sovereign, our banquet, our crown: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your palace. Train us to be heirs to your throne, that we may shield the needy. We thank you for all you have already done and the great love that has been shown to us. We lift up our joys and our concerns, bringing all things before you. May we experience

your grace in our laughter and our tears. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in celebration, knowing you are with us. And may you guide us in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Prayer for Mother's Day: Lord, today we give thanks to you for the mothers in our lives. We give thanks for the moms, the grandmas, the aunts, the in-laws, and all those that have nurtured us and had a mother's care. We thank you for putting these people into our lives to help us, to guide us, to lead us, and to care for us. We give thanks for the love they have shown. We lift up our prayers for healing as we remember those who are no longer with us in this life. We lift up our prayers in thanks for those who are. We lift up prayers of hope for those just becoming mothers, that you may help them to grow in love. And may we always give thanks and lend our love so that we may help each other to grow in your love. And it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 13 through 22.

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 defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect. Maintain a good conscience 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 lives, 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 NRSV)*

Our next reading comes from John chapter 14 verse 15 through 21 and 25 through 27.

"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." "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of

all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.
(John 14:15-21,25-27 NRSV*)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Today we look at being one in love. And that can be a confusing statement. But I believe that when we act together in one Spirit, that when we act in Christ, that we act as one with one heart, with one mind, with one purpose, and because of that we can achieve so much more than we could separated. And that we do this because we are united in love. We help in being united by making sure that we are doing what is right and what is good. And what we see this in our readings for today. First is our reading from 1 Peter. Peter is discussing what happens when we do good. Part of that is a reminder that when we are doing what is right and what is good, people see and people know. And Peter is asking who is going to complain if you are doing the right thing. Which is a good question. Who is going to complain if you are helping others? But sadly, some people will complain if you are helping others. But even if they do, we're strengthened in knowing that what we're doing is right. We're blessed for doing what is right. And Peter makes a statement here that I am often reminded of in my own life. We are called to be able to explain the hope that we have in Christ. For me, that hope is in love. We are called to explain ourselves with gentleness and respect so that we reflect our love of Christ in all that we do. That when we tell people why we have this hope we do so in love. We do so by telling others exactly why we have that hope. That we follow Christ in love because he loves us and that when we are one in love we are able to stand up to do good and not be put to shame. Because even if we suffer for doing good, it's better to suffer for doing good than to suffer for evil. As we act in Christ, we do what we need to do in love because it's the right thing to do. And I think it's important for us to recognize this, that we do this in love because we know that Christ did the right thing for us out of love. So, out of love, we can do the right thing to honor God. In our reading from the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." And what's the greatest of the commandments? Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus also reminds us that he's not leaving us on our own. There'll be an advocate, the Holy Spirit, to remind us of all that Christ has taught us.

And for me, all of this was very appropriate for Mother's Day because every mother figure in my life, by blood and by choice, believes in standing up for what is right. That it doesn't matter if other people don't like it. It doesn't matter if they are told to be quiet. I have never known any of them to back down when they are challenged about standing up for others. And it is hard for me not to think of my mother when thinking about standing up for what you believe in. As long as I have known her, she has always been willing to speak up and stand up for what is right. And she would stand up to whoever she needed to stand up to for whoever she needed to stand up for. Whether it was protecting the community, protecting her children, or protecting all of those kids that she somehow picked up as also her children, I have never seen her back down from standing up for what is right. I've never seen her back away from doing good to protect the people around her. And I've seen her stand up to a lot. I've seen her take on schools and government alike. I have always known her to speak out when her

voice was needed. I'm reminded of that here because that sense of justice is strengthened in love. Because when you love your neighbor as yourself, you want to make sure that they do not suffer. You want to make sure that they are not attacked for who they are. That they are not persecuted, belittled, or looked down on. For me, standing up for the least and the last is one of the best ways to show Christ's love. And I'm always strengthened by the Holy Spirit in whatever I do because I know that when I am following Christ, the spirit is there to guide me and strengthen me. And I take that sense of justice instilled by my mother and carry it with me always, serving Christ to this day holding true to that justice and to that love. It has been there in every mother figure that I have. And I love them for it because it strengthens me.

It strengthens me because I am reminded that we are together in love and that because of love we are stronger together. And that together in Christ we are stronger in love because we are one in love. It unites us in an unbreakable bond so that we may overcome any injustice, any persecution, any hate, and any malice as they can be overcome in love. I even expanded today's reading a little bit to include a verse that I think we all need to hear. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." I included that line because it can be scary to do the right thing. We may feel that it is easier to say nothing. It is often safer to do nothing. We may want to avoid rankling any feathers so that we fit in. We don't want to upset any carts so that we aren't noticed. We won't make anyone upset if we never speak out about anything. But I have found that it is very hard to stand up for what is right with doing nothing. I have found that the peace of doing nothing is a false peace because love always pushes us to do all that we can for the people we love. And if we are to follow Christ, we are called to love our neighbor and to love God. And the way I see it is if I love God with my whole heart, then I'm going to do everything I can for God's people. And I'm going to do all that I can so that I may show love to the people around me. That I will help them with the hope that they can find peace. That they may know the peace of Christ and that they may know it because of love. And if I have to speak up so that they do not live in fear, then I will speak up because of love. And if I have to speak up to keep others from abusing them, I will speak up because of love. And if there are those who are too afraid to say anything I will speak up because of love.

Because it is love that we are called to have, and it is love that Christ showed us on the cross. And it is hope that Christ gives us in the Resurrection. And if we are to be Easter people raising our voices loud then we must share in that love and we must share in that hope. That we are one in hope and one in love as we are one in Christ. But to do so it means that we must be able to call others to freely discover that love and that hope so that they may know peace. And I pray that we will do all that we can so that all people may know peace. That they may let their hearts know love and not be afraid. And that we show them the mercy and love that Christ has shown us so that they may know the hope that we have. That we may extend the love of Christ to them so that they know the love of God that is there for them. So that all people may know hope and peace because we are one in love. So let us rejoice in our risen Savior and all that he has done, all that he is doing, and all that he will do. Let us celebrate that we may come together in hope to be of one love. The love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

shown to us through his death and resurrection so that we may be free to love, from this day forth and forevermore. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Easter People

Our current series looks at how we live as people who are forever changed by the Easter miracle. Each week we explore another aspect of how our lives are changed because of Christ and how we are called to live as Easter people.

April 23rd – Eyes Open – 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

April 30th – Stray Sheep – 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-18

May 7th – Finding the Way – 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

May 14th – One in Love – 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May 21st – Yours, Mine, and Ours – 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup	Ambulance Crew	Our Healthcare Workers	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Phyllis Gabel	Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor
Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Phil Hawickhorst	Ray Carr
Jane Williams	Alice Sherwood	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks
Steve Carlen	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz	Donna Carlen
Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser	Corine Howard
Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester	Connie Brown	Jack Pitcher
Don Blade	Leo Westjohn	Marsha Overton	Darin Pease
Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Larry Heueman	Paul Cox
Family of Raymond Shook	Taylor Waldorf	Harriet Tucker	Becky McGuiness
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Greg Williams	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lavon Figgins	Kara Newton	

Rev Camron D St.Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

cdstmichael@outlook.com

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

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