

All Shall Be Well in the Spirit

May 17, 2020 Easter 6

John 14: 15-21

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I was in the office on Thursday this week, filling in for Harvey who was self-isolating as his roommate waited for COVID-19 test results, which did come back negative. I was there for the 10-11am office hours to allow people to drop off donations for the Victoria School families in need as well as for Alex Pelletiers' lunch program. It was heartwarming to see the generosity of our community as people dropped off fixings for whole meals, baking, and lunch items. I also get regular reports from members of the Congregational Care Committee about the people they are calling and how these people are doing. This past week, there was disturbing graffiti attacks on three United Church Affirming Ministries in Saskatoon but the communities responded quickly to clean the graffiti and write chalk messages of love, welcome, and inclusion on the sidewalks at each location. These are all examples of love in action in our community.

Jesus main commandment was to 'love one another'. In today's reading he says to his disciples, at the gathering for the Last Supper, if you love me you will keep my commandments. In the previous chapter, he gave them a new commandment, 'that you love one another, just as I have loved you'. He also emphasized in his ministry the Old testament commandment to love your neighbour as yourself. As we move through this pandemic, we have been witnessing, experiencing, and some of us really living out, what it means to love our neighbour. At a webinar I took part in this past week, offered by the Missional Commons in Canada, with one of the [authors](#) of [Practices for Refounding God's People, The Missional Challenge of the West](#), they invited us to reflect for ourselves and with our people, 'what have you noticed in your neighbourhood during this time of people connecting/caring that you want to see continue?'. I would like to invite us to take a moment to discuss with one another this question. What have you experienced in your neighbourhood that is different or new or noteworthy as we move through this pandemic time?

Breakout Rooms

Are there any stories or experiences you'd like to share? – raise your hand or unmute yourself

As we celebrate these experiences of love, we see them as following Jesus' commandment to love one another, as I have loved you. What do we know about how Jesus loved?

- Jesus loved by walking with and calling common people to work with him. The disciples were poor fishermen, and the others were common workers.
- Jesus loved by healing the sick and freeing those bound by mental illness (demons).
- Jesus loved by trusting people's faith they had in him to heal or help them.
- Jesus loved by listening and being open to being challenged. He expanded his ministry from just the Israelites to include the Syrophenician woman. (Mt 15: 21-28)
- Jesus loved by welcoming tax collectors, prostitutes, and other so called sinners and moving them to change their lives.
- Jesus loved by challenging the religious leaders to love more, rather than following the letter of the law.
- Jesus loved by feeding the crowd when they were in need, drawing out their generosity.
- Jesus loved by supporting and standing with women who had been excluded and ignored.
- Jesus loved by believing so strongly in love and justice that he was willing to die for it.
- Jesus loved by promising that he would always be with us, and would send us the Holy Spirit as an advocate for us.

What does this mean, to send the Holy Spirit as an advocate? Jesus knows that the disciples will be lost, bereft, in despair after he is gone, even after his ascension, following the resurrection, so the Spirit will come to support them and help them remember what he said and did and taught. It is God's indwelling love and strength. It is God working in and through each of us, to encourage, support and help us to remember God's love and grace. In what ways have you experienced God's Spirit, God's love indwelling in you, and through others, during this challenging time?

Julian of Norwich came to understand this power of love, of God's Spirit in and through us and in everything. Julian lived in the time of the Black Plague and it is speculated that she lost her husband and children to it. She had a deathly illness

as well and almost died. Suddenly her pain stopped and in continuing to pray she was visited by sixteen revelations or visions, what she called showings. She spent the next 16 years in contemplation and solitude in an anchor room at St. Julian Church in Norwich, reflecting on and writing about these showings. One of her profound insights that she is most known for, is that in the midst of challenge, 'all shall be well again' Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations this week shared Mirabai Starr's reflections on Julian's declaration:

This assertion is meant to penetrate the fog of our despair and wake us up. . . . Julian repeats her declaration three times—most emphatically the third: *All will be well and all will be well and every kind of thing shall be well.* She does not ask us to . . . [relegate] everything that unfolds to the will of God, calling it perfect against all evidence to the contrary. She squarely faces the inevitability that we will miss the mark [what Julian calls "sin"] and that there is wickedness in this world. Even so, she is convinced that the nature of the Divine is loving-kindness, and she wants us to absorb this into every fiber of our being.

She continues talking about how Julian used to obsess about God and sin and why wouldn't God eliminate our negative proclivities when the world was made. She says: "But what God-the-Mother showed Julian in a near-death vision [during her thirteenth revelation] was that all shall be well anyway. Not in spite of our transgressions but because of them." It is when we stumble that the Divine looks compassionately upon us, with abundant grace. All shall be well.

Julian believed God is love and through the showings, her revelations and her contemplation upon them, came to understand that God is One; Everything is in God; God is in everything; God transcends and encloses all that is made. This is the Spirit in us, in everything, working in and through us. Whenever we experience love, we experience God, the Spirit working in and through us.

The Spirit of love, of God, works in us encouraging acts of love and generosity. It is not disembodied but connected with everything and everyone. Human connection is important, even when we can't be face to face, we connect with one another by reaching out, by supporting those in need, by knowing that we are not alone. That is the Spirit. That is grace. That is a sustaining power in these times.

May we draw on and experience that Spirit in our lives, in all we are going through, and in everyone and everything we connect with. Knowing that All Shall be well again, All shall be well and All manner of things will be well.