

Easter 3 B
St. Luke 24:36b-48
1 John 3:5-7
April 15th, 2018
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Abide in Jesus

"You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous."

If I go by what John says, then I guess you'd have to say I am not much of a Christian. I know I am a sinner. I often feel as scripture says, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." [Psalm 51:3]

Imagine if that were all that I could think or say about myself. I would want to crawl into a hole and die. What hope would there be for me to live? I would be imprisoned by the weight of my sins. I would be trapped in a place from which there would be no escaping. My situation would be hopeless.

So many people live with a low self-estimation of themselves. It is easy to feel trapped and marked for life by your own past mistakes and, shall we use the word here, sins. But it is no way to live as a slave to the past, whether that past is recent or distant. Freedom from that stain and mark of sin is what we all secretly desire. As the Psalmist said in Psalm 51: "Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities." Sometimes we would rather hide than face the horror of our own sins and iniquities. Surely we wish to hide them from others and pretend that we have no sin. This we all know from our personal experience is a lie.

Humility is the polar opposite of the braggart, and a little humility never hurts. You don't have to be better than other people. You don't have to be better than yourself. You need to be better as God wants you to be: a better person at the core. As the Gospel said, "Everyone who does what is right is righteous..." God wants us to do what is right. God wants us to walk as God's Holy people.

I find that this is something that unfolds with each day. Each day I am presented with opportunities to be the person God has called me to be. I often fail perhaps

because I am not brave enough or I am too worried about the risk to myself if I speak up for what is right and just. But it is better to be for what is right than be silent in the face of injustice, and unkindness, or worse yet, downright evil. As the Psalmist observed in Psalm 4: "When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent." It is better to lay your head on the pillow with a clear conscience than to toss and turn knowing you failed to do or say what was right. And I am not talking about being self-righteous here, for that is as bad or worse than the braggart.

"No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him." These are hard words to absorb. I sin, and by this it sounds like I have not seen him or known him. I try hard not to sin, but sometimes I just don't try hard enough.

If we abide in God, God will abide with us, he promises in John's Gospel. This co-habitation of our mortal bodies bodes well for choosing right over wrong, holiness over sin. We are reminded by God's presence that our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

As St. Paul says in I Corinthians 6:19: "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" Sinning is choosing to disrespect the presence of God in your temple. It is sacrilegious.

As it says in Psalm 4: How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

Unfortunately, I find it too easy to be disrespectful in this way. But thanks be to God for God's love, patience and forgiveness with me. This I will boast about.

This abiding with God, God in us and we in God, helps us live out the call to be holy people and to choose what is right when it is placed before us. One of the best hymns which describes this abiding with God is in the Hymn Eventide: [Hymnal 662] Here is the full, original text:

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

I need your presence every passing hour.
What but your grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like yourself my guide and strength can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

I fear no foe, with You at hand to bless:
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting?
Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if you abide with me.

Hold now Your Cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me
Abide with me, abide with me..."

This is the day the Lord has made: rejoice and be glad in it because God abides in you, and you in God. "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." [John 14:20]

God's presence inspires us to be better people. God's presence strengthens us to be the better people God calls us to be.

"I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. [Isaiah 43:25]

"You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound. I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety." AMEN!