

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 East Moline, Illinois
 Pastor Becky Sherwood
May 9, 2021, The Sixth Sunday of Lent
 Psalm 98, John 15: 9-17
Plugged in and Abiding

In eight verses, Jesus uses the love nine times.

“As God has love me, so I love you, abide in my love.”

“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love...”

“Love one another as I have loved you.”

We too use the word love many, many times a day.

I love books.

I love my husband, I love my wife,

I love pizza,

I love my new phone, my new I-Pad, my big-screen TV,

I love my girlfriend, my boyfriend, my partner,

I love my job,

I love golfing,

I love that spring is finally here,

I love my children,

I love gaming,

I love texting with friends,

I love my grandchildren,

I love my mother, I love my father, I love my family,

I love the weekend.

We are people who love a lot of things, a lot of people, and we love in a lot of different ways.

And Jesus says: “As God has loved me, so I have loved you, abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept God’s commandments and abide in God’s love.” (John 15:9)

With so many loves in our lives, how do we love Jesus, how do we abide in his love?

We can find answers in what we read this morning in John 15. Jesus was in the Upper Room with his disciples, he had showed them how to serve by washing their feet, he had served them the bread and the cup and said “do this in remembrance of me”, and he gave them these final instructions in John 15 before they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane and his betrayal and arrest.

Last week we looked at what he said in the beginning verses of John 15. It was there that we heard him say that God was the vine grower, Jesus was the true vine and we are all the branches. Or as I suggested last week: God is the grower; Jesus is the trunk of the tree and we are the branches.

To grow, we need to stay connected to Jesus.

In verses 9-17 Jesus continues to use the image of the vine and the branches. So, this week I’ve been thinking about grapevines and growing grapes, and abiding in Jesus’ love, and I’ve been thinking about what Jesus might have said if he was been saying these words for the first time to us today here in the Quad Cities.

How might he have talked to us about abiding in his love? What images might he have used? Most of us don't have grapevines around us to see Jesus' examples, but, I've been thinking, we do have cell phones.

And we have I-pads and tablets and laptops and computers.

We text, tweet, snapchat, Zoom, Google Meets, Facebook, Tik Tok, we FaceTime and some of us even still e-mail.

And even if you are old-school with electronics, you still plug in your appliances.

We have phone chargers, and chargers and plug-ins for our laptops, tablets, earbuds and headphones. And we often have charging stations so we can charge everything at the same time, in the same place.

And many of us have that tangle of old charging cords that we're not sure what they go to, but we might need them some day so we keep them.

Now admittedly our electronics don't produce grapes, literally or metaphorically. But what we do with them can have a lot to do with producing the love that Jesus was talking about.

Thinking about all these things, I imagined what John 15 would have sounded like if Jesus had given this teaching about abiding in his love for the first time in 2021. Maybe it would have gone something like this:

And Jesus said: God is the only true Power Source for Love, and I am the power outlet, the charging station,

and you are the plugs, if you stay plugged into me, just as I stay plugged into God,
you will abide in my love, just as I abide in God's love.

When you are connected to me, you are connected to my love.

I will transfer love to you, just as God has transferred love to me.

Apart from me your batteries will wear down, you will constantly need recharging.

Apart from me you won't have enough bars and your connections will break.

Apart from me your Zoom conversations will break apart and buffer, when you try to share my love.

I am the only Wi-Fi that works all the time, even when you're away from good routers.

I am the only outlet that will keep you truly powered by the power that comes from God.

With me you'll never see the "10% battery remaining" message;

with me it's 100% of God's power, 24/7, 365 days a year.

You can't create God's love on your own, and you can't recharge on your own.

I have chosen you, and I choose to give you God's power and love.

You can't buy this love other places,

you can't manufacture it on your own,

you won't find it by Googling, or on Amazon, or by searching the App Store, or buying a new router.

Jesus might say:

God is the True Source of Love,

and God gives that love away through me.

It is a free gift that I have for each one of you, when you are connected to me.

And why do I want you plugged into me, just as I am plugged into God? Because I want you to know the joy of my love, and I want your joy to be complete. This is my gift for you: love and joy!

And I give you this gift of joy, because this is my commandment: that you love one another with the love that you have known from me.

In the past you didn't receive all of the data I had for you; you couldn't know everything about me. But now that I have lived on earth and friended you and you have access to all of my Facebook page;

you can know all about me, just as I know all about God.

I want us to be Linked In together, just as I am Linked In to God.

I have friended you, because God has friended me,

I want you to know me face to face

I want to talk to you in real time.

I do all these things for you so you can follow me and love one another. But you can't create this love for others on your own;

apart from me, love will break down;

apart from me your batteries will run down.

Your connections to each other will break-up.

You won't always have the right phone charger.

Sometimes you'll misplace your power cord.

Your real-time connections won't fit in your schedule, and you'll miss each other,

You'll strain to hear what the other person is saying, but it won't be clear.

You'll want to be loving, but you can't do this without me.

So, ask God for what you need,

know that God will help you stay connected to me,

so you can stay connected to each other.

Plugged into me, you are plugged into the true source of Love.

Take your energy from my love

and then give that love away to all people.

Then my joy will live in you, and your joy will be complete.