

11:00 Confirmation Sermon
May 21, 2006
Abide in Jesus' Love

It's a wonderful day.

Confirmation.

Affirmation of Baptism.

39 young people affirming their baptismal faith.

I like having them sitting in the choir area.

You're able to see them.

They're able to see you.

Those of you being confirmed,

I hope as you look out on the faces of your family

and friends

and congregation,

that you see the love that is there.

Because you are loved.

But even more,

I hope as we gather today

and each week,

that you hear the good news that Jesus loves you.

Pastor Brian Stoffregen says,

"I believe that if nothing else,

every parishioner in our congregations

should leave every worship service having heard:

'You are someone Jesus loves.'"

And you are!

Karl Barth was a famous theologian from Switzerland.

He's best known for his work titled "Church Dogmatics".

When Karl Barth died,
he was still working on his 13-volume work.
He had been writing it for 36 years,
and it was 6 million words in length.

(Can you imagine your teacher saying,
"Your paper needs to be 6 million words long.
You have 36 years to complete it.")

A reporter once asked Dr. Barth
if he could summarize
what he had said in those 6 million words.
Dr. Barth thought for a moment
and then said:
"Jesus loves me, this I know,
for the Bible tells me so."

Would you sing it with me:
**Jesus loves me, this I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong.
They are weak, but he is strong.**

**Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
Yes, Jesus loves me.
The Bible tells me so.**

And he does.
Jesus loves you!
That's good news.

Take a look at the front of your bulletin.
What does it say?

**You did not choose me,
but I chose you...**

That's what Jesus said
in John, chapter 15:16,
shortly before he died on the cross.

You did not choose me,
but I chose you...

That's where it starts.
Not with what we do.
But with what God has already done.

God has already chosen us.
And today,
in our Confirmation promises,
we are responding to God's love.
That love's been with you
since before you were born.
And that love will be with you
throughout your life,
and even beyond—
—even forever.

So Jesus says in verse 9 (read with me),
**As the Father has loved me,
so I have loved you:**

Abide in my love.

What does it mean to abide in his love?

The word translated abide
can also be translated:
Remain
Stay
Live
Dwell
Last
Endure
Continue

It's a word that shows a connection.
Between a branch and a vine.
Between Jesus and you.

To abide in Jesus' love
is to stay connected to Jesus' love.

And how do you do that?

In the next verse, verse 10 (read with me), Jesus says:

**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.**

The word translated "keep"
doesn't just mean blind obedience.
It has more of a sense of "holding dear".
To treasure.
It's not a burden.
It's a joyful response of love.

And that's what Jesus says in verse 11.
He tells us this so that our joy may be complete.

When we keep his commandments,
we abide in his love.
When we abide in his love,
our joy is complete.

And then in verse 12,
he tells us the commandment.
**This is my commandment,
that you love one another
as I have loved you.**

That's it.
You are loved by God.
The commandment
is to reflect that love.
To love as you've been loved.
That's it.
That's all.
And that's a lot.
That's everything.

What Jesus wants from you
is that you know his love for you.
And that you love as you've been loved.
And if you do that,
your joy will be full.

But somehow that's really hard for us.
To love like Jesus loves us.
We like the being loved part,
although sometimes even that is hard for us to accept.
In fact, maybe it's really hard for us to really believe

that someone could love us that much.
So much, in fact,
that he'd die for us.

Who can you think of who would die for you?
Can you think of someone who loves you so much
that they'd even die for you?
That's how much Jesus loves you.
So much that he died for you.
For you.
For you.

And what he wants for you
is a life where you know that love,
and share that love.
Abide in that love.
Live in that love.

Philip Yancey writes about the apostle named John.
John is identified in the Bible as,
"the one Jesus loved".

If John were to be asked,
"What is your primary identity in life?",
he wouldn't say
I'm a disciple,
Or I'm an apostle,
Or I'm an evangelist,
Or I'm an author of one of the four Gospels.
He would say,
"I'm the one Jesus loves."

What would it mean for you
if you saw your primary identity in life as
"The one Jesus loves."
How differently would you view yourself
at the end of the day?

Yancey continues:

Sociologists have a theory of the looking-glass self:

–you become what the most important person in your life thinks you are
(your wife, your father, the boss, or whoever).

How would my life change

if I truly believed the Bible's astounding words
about God's love for me?

If I looked in the mirror
and saw what God sees?

Because,

as Max Lucado puts it,

If God had a refrigerator,

your picture would be on it.

If he had a wallet,

your photo would be in it.

He sends you flowers every spring

and a sunrise every morning.

Whenever you want to talk,

He'll listen.

He can live anywhere in the universe,

and he chose your heart.

What about the Christmas gift He sent you in Bethlehem;

not to mention that Friday at Calvary.

Face it, friend.

He's crazy about you.

Abide in his love.

Love one another as Jesus loves you.

Yes, Jesus loves me.

Yes, Jesus loves me.

Yes, Jesus loves me.

The Bible tells me so.

In Jesus' name,
Amen