

Life is Good, Because God Abides in Us

1 John 3:16-24

May 3, 2009

Easter 4, B

Life is good. We are looking at how we embrace that statement. Certainly, we all agree with the statement when everything seems to be great in our lives, but can we say life is good, all the time? A couple of weeks ago, I shared with you in the sermon, how because God shines his light into our dark places and offers to us forgiveness from our sins, we can say that life is good, because God is Light. Last week, Wesley brought us to a new understanding, of looking at how God cares for us as the ultimate parent. God created us for the joy of watching us enjoy the goodness of life. Life is good, because we are children of God.

Let's look at another way we say that life is good. Sometimes, it is difficult to think about life being good when we don't feel it. ...When we have pressures around us, that cause us to wobble. But life is good all the time because God is good all the time. In vs 16

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. NRSV

We know how Jesus laid down his life for us on the cross. But the verse says to us, that we are to lay down our lives for one another. How do we do that? And when do we find ourselves among those who need?

People say I don't know anyone who's not a Christian. My friends are from church, or they go to church somewhere else. Listen, if we only find ourselves with others who have no need to connect or reconnect with God, we are in denial. As a pastor, I know that it is easy to become complacent with my surroundings and to be excited to be in ministry with people who are walking on the same path. To be surrounded by people who are seeking God, but God calls us to a higher place.

Vs 18 says

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. NRSV

What does it look like to love in truth and action? Have you ever been to a Christian concert? Two people get to the door at the same time, and both offer the other one to go first. Two people reach the same seat at the same time, and they offer each other their seat. The same happens at the refreshment booth and the parking garage. And then what happens? Often we go back to our same way of driving in traffic, and trying to get to the front of the line. Why do we do that?

Sometimes, if we are honest, we may say, "I don't want to be caring towards others. I don't want to move over in my pew, to greet the stranger, to be involved in helping someone to rebuild their house, to share my resources I worked so hard for. I don't

want to spend what little bit of free time I have taking out my neighbors garbage. I worked hard for what I have, and no one helped me.”

And if you say those things, you are right. We cannot possibly find within us, the power to give ourselves for others. But then we see the hand of God – a smile, a card, food brought. We see how God abides in us. We see how God gives us the strength to do God’s work. We discover how God abides in us to be people of truth and action. God does not live far away and comes by to see us sometimes, but God abides in us. God’s Holy Spirit is given to direct our lives, to live within us, so we can do all things, through the one who gives us strength.

How does the Holy Spirit abide in you? Do you try your best to keep him in a small little box? When do you know that God abides in you?

Without faith in Christ, we are not able to love one another properly. And by faith in Christ, I mean; depending on Christ, trusting in Christ, believing that God abides within us.

Last Sunday, I saw a group of men who had discovered the meaning of God abides in us. I was invited to attend a closing event of Kairos, at the Clemens unit. The men offenders were given the opportunity to speak, if they wanted to, about what the weekend meant to them. What a powerful witness! Some spoke of how they had never felt like part of a family before, some spoke of regrets they had, and some shared how they wished they had been a positive role model for younger family members. Several of the men spoke of how they had felt a connection while being in a gang, but they now knew something even more powerful. One said he signed up to come for the great food they were going to receive. He was told by one of the other inmates, “You are going to receive a lot more than that!” The offender spoke powerful words about how God had become real to him. ALL of them spoke about experiencing God in their life. They ALL shared how they had never known a love so powerful as they had experienced the last 3 days. They ALL had experienced God’s abiding love. There was a new discovery about how God abides with them.

The good news is this:

Vs 23-24

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us. NRSV

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