



**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

***The Sixth Sunday of Easter***

**Gospel Reading**

**John 15.9-17**

**Other Readings: Acts 10.44-48      Psalm 98      1 John 5.1-6**

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

**Homily**

American author Dr Brene Brown questions the 50/50 approach to marriage - that both partners should put in equal effort, acknowledging that relationships rarely work that neatly. The system she and her husband Steve apply to navigating the daily highs and lows of family life is to quantify their energy levels and their capacity for kindness, helpfulness, patience etc. When she comes home exhausted, she'll say, 'I've only got 20' (in terms of stamina, or ability to offer empathy or support); and Steve will respond with, 'I'll cover you. I'll pull the 80.' But, when their numbers combined don't add up to 100, when they're both running low, they have to figure out, with maturity and in loving trust, 'a plan of kindness' to support one another. Brown suggests that a partnership works best when you carry your loved-ones deficit, or they carry yours; and when you both have just 20, that's when you should talk and be kind, to avoid doing or saying something that causes upset or harm.

This approach to maintaining fruitful and flourishing relationships is echoed in today's Gospel, for, in the relationship we have with God, as we abide in His love, He forever takes up our deficit. When we only have 20 to give, He makes up the 80. His strength of love for us covers our weakness. This is true also of the relationship between we, His disciples – that we love one another in such a way that we cover each other's deficits too! This kind of giving of ourselves exhibits the fruits of the Holy Spirit – we show to each other, and to the world, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, and we pour out more when others, of necessity, must give less.

You might have heard of the term ‘collaborative ministry’, a form of team working that acknowledges no one person can do, or is good, at everything, and that we accomplish more working together, to our strengths and giftings, than if we work alone. As we are reminded in verse 16, God has chosen us, and in doing so, He has appointed to each one what we sometimes describe as a ‘*baptismal vocation*’. All of us have a part to play in the mission of God to the world, and we do this most effectively, collaboratively. In this way, by lovingly supporting each other, both in the challenges life brings to our doors, and in the ministries to which we have been called, by modelling our love for one another, (John 13: 35), we show those in our wider communities that we are His disciples, and we are better able to get the job done. Our work is not easy, we are to preach the Gospel afresh to each generation and continually make new disciples - but by working together, and lovingly taking up the slack as and where we can, we are able to achieve great things.

Going back to where we started, we should acknowledge that relationships in church can be as pressured as those within the home. So, then, in order to do the work entrusted to us, to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, we too might look to working, in love, something like the 20/80 system; and when energy or empathy are in short supply, when our fuel gauges read only 20/20, then, instead of falling into disharmony, or even conflict, let’s, rather, sit down with each other in maturity and in trust, to work out a ‘plan of kindness’. Then, ultimately, the benefit of our work, done with a willing, relational, loving heart, filled with the Holy Spirit, is that we will receive joy – joy in the service of our Lord, and joy in living and working in fellowship, collegiality, partnership, companionship, friendship, with other followers of The Way of Christ. Amen.

### **Conversation Questions**

1. Think of a time when you had little left to give and you found yourself supported by someone in church. How did that feel? Did you give thanks to and for this person? Now think of a time when you were there for someone else when they were spent, supporting them. How did that feel? Did you see this as part of your ministry as a disciple?
2. Do you know what God is calling you to? Have you identified your baptismal vocation? It might be that you’re called to help lead intercessions in the service, clean the church, be involved with the music group or choir, or part of the welcome team, perhaps working in the community in the charity shop, at the luncheon club, with the Scouts or Guides, or at the Food Bank – the possibilities are endless. If you’d like help in discerning/working out what God is calling you to, do you know who to talk to? Perhaps you could chat with someone on the PCC, a Churchwarden, a Reader or ALM, or your parish priest.
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

## **Prayer**

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

## **Collect of the day**

God our redeemer,  
you have delivered us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us  
to eternal joy;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*(or)*

Risen Christ,  
by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples:  
help your Church to obey your command  
and draw the nations to the fire of your love,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, material from which is incorporated in this service paper, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council, 2000. Scripture passage from the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised) copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.