

Midweek Meeting - John 15

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again to John 15, and just for a little to look at the verses from verse 9 to verse 11. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Now, at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus gives the last of the I Am statements, where he says, I am the true vine.

And Jesus uses two pictures here to show us something of who the Christian is. We see that we're branches, and we see that we are friends.

And the branches and the friends, they have privileges, but they also have responsibilities. The great privilege we have is of sharing with Christ and of living in him, because we cannot live or share unless we are united, unless we are the branches.

[1 : 17] He is the vine, we are the branches. But we're also friends. And that, again, is a wonderful privilege, because we share in that friendship.

But there are also huge responsibilities. And the great responsibility that is given to us here is that we are to abide in him, that we are to continue in him, to abide in his love.

Now, this word abide is very, it features very much in this chapter, indeed, in verses 9 and 10.

You can see that that word appears three times, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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.

So, between the beginning of the chapter and about to verse 11, you'll find this about the word abide is used about nine times.

[2 : 18] And also, you have the word continue, which is very closely related to. And to abide means really to keep in fellowship with Christ.

Now, fellowship, of course, is something that must be worked at. In order to have fellowship, we really need to have communication.

Now, I know that we can have fellowship without communication. We can have fellowship simply by being in the presence. But being in the presence usually comes from, that follows on from communication.

And we have never, the fellowship that we have with the Lord has come about through, first of all, his communication to us. It is through the word.

We didn't come to faith apart from the word. So, it was his word to us that was the first means, of course, applied by the Spirit. But it is the word that comes.

[3 : 24] So, there is this communication. And the moment that that word takes root within our own heart, we begin to communicate with the Lord.

So, it's a two-way thing. And so that this fellowship begins. And it is vital to our Christian development and our Christian growth.

Communication is a key in life. It used to be a slogan with BT, it's good to talk. And we can apply that to the Christian faith as well.

I'm sure many couples that have broken up, whether it's in marriage or ones that were intending to get married, that very often you will find that one of the things that started to go wrong was that they stopped communicating with one another.

And that there was like a growing separation of they stopped to talk. I've heard people say that. That was one of the first things, you know, it said we stopped talking to one another.

[4 : 29] That's not always the reason why couples break up. But it's often a starting point where things start to go wrong is where the communication is. And it's true spiritually as well.

It's vital that we are talking. And we mustn't think of talking with regard to the Christian faith simply as our talking to the Lord, because so often that's the way we think.

But it's very important to lay hold upon his talking to us so that we should have the attitude of Samuel who said, Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.

And every day as we come to God's word, we need to be saying, Lord, speak to me. Speak to me in your words so that I will hear what you say.

Give me the faith to lay hold upon it. And this brings a reality and a vitality to our Christian faith, because we're conscious of the Lord in us, speaking to us, engaging with us.

[5 : 27] And so there's a reality to everything. So this abiding, of course, is absolutely key to our Christian faith. Now, Jesus tells us something amazing here, because he says, As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now, at one level, we would have to say that the love that the Father has for the Son is a unique love that transcends any love that can ever be discovered or known anywhere.

It is an altogether powerful, eternal, everlasting, unchanging, wonderful love. It is the love that is rooted and centered within the Godhead.

However, Jesus loves us too. And he tells us, that's exactly what he says, That as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

So that's quite an extraordinary statement. So how can we think of it? Well, we can just say two very brief things. The Father's love for the Son is an eternal love.

[6 : 43] And Christ's love for us is a love that is also, we could say, eternal. Because we were loved before the foundation of the world.

The love that Christ has for us didn't begin the day we were born. It didn't begin when we were in our mother's womb.

It didn't begin the moment that Jesus came into this world. It didn't begin the day that Adam was created. It didn't even begin when God said, Let there be light in the beginning.

In the beginning, God. And when God said, Let there be light. It didn't begin then. It began in eternity. We were loved.

Jesus tells us that. We were loved before. I have loved you. Before the foundation of the world. And that is an extraordinary statement. And it's impossible at any level, really, to get our heads around that, to begin to understand it.

[7 : 50] But faith grasps it. That's what faith does. Faith says, Yeah, I believe that. That's foundational to who I am as a Christian. I believe it with all my heart.

I don't understand it, but I know it. It's as real as anything that I know or lay hold of in this world. And so that's the kind of love that we are loved with.

And of course, this love has been demonstrated so powerfully by Jesus Christ. That is, of course, why he came into this world. The Father gave to Jesus a people, the church.

He gave them. And they've been gifted to Christ. But of course, Christ has to come in order to purchase it. And of course, that's why he came into this world.

Because this love, love to his Father and love to us, propelled him every step of the way. And so we find that the Lord Jesus Christ has come into this world.

[8 : 51] And he died on the cross. And of course, in the fullness of time, the Holy Spirit revealed the things of Christ, revealed the word to us, began to woo us and draw us to himself.

So that all the previous barriers and hostilities and enmities that were there before were broken. The resistance that was always saying no had gone.

And we came to the place. Those of us, remember, I'm sure we were all different. But there's a stubbornness in the human heart that resists God.

But there comes a point when we can resist no more. And he enables us to do what we couldn't do of ourselves. I remember, it was a while before I was converted, it was a Sunday morning communion in Cavanash.

And of course, those who didn't go to the table, we tried to get as far back as possible. I remember being in the very back seat. And I had an interest.

[10 : 04] But what almost struck me was I remember everybody walked in the back door down and the table was down towards the front. And people walked down there as they came in.

And there were two young girls who came in. And it was something I never forgot. As I saw them walking down, they were beautiful young girls.

But I saw them for the first time ever. I saw kind of a different kind of beauty. And I thought, you know, there's something beautiful in that Christian. They're not just beautiful as girls.

They're beautiful. And then this young man came in. And what struck me was, wow, how brave you are. I could not do that.

I could not go down there in front of everybody and take my place at the Lord's table. And I thought, if I ever get converted, I can never do that.

[11:03] That's beyond me. Because there was an inward kind of fear. And I would say, even if I ever became a Christian, I could never testify or tell anybody that was a Christian.

If I ever became a Christian, I would be a secret disciple. But, you know, when God begins to work in a Christian's heart, all that changes. And that first glimpse that I got, it wasn't too far away from, it was probably only another couple of communions till the time when I was converted.

But I saw that when I look back as the beginning of God, in a sense, beginning to show something of God's people or something of the beauty that was in them.

But also showing what he could do for the person who said, if I'm ever converted, I will be a secret follower. Nobody will know because I can't.

I haven't the courage or the strength to tell anybody that I'm a Christian. And yet the Lord takes you step by step by step. He breaks down the resistance and he enables you to do what you yourself thought you could never do.

[12:11] That's the work of the Holy Spirit. And that is because of love. You are compelled by love. That's the amazing thing. We're driven by love. We don't maybe analyze it, but that's what happens.

Another reason, what Jesus says, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. And we could say that the Father loves the Son with an unchangeable love.

And so it is with Jesus Christ. His love for you and for me is unchanging. Because as we know, it is impossible for God to change.

He is without, there's no variableness or shadow of turning in him. God doesn't change his mind or alter his opinion. There's nothing about us that will ever surprise the Lord.

And so the love that he has for us is a love that is reflecting who he is. And that is the unchanging God.

[13:14] But you know, some people say, okay, just as the Father loved the Son, and it's an unchanging love. So Jesus loves us.

But was there not a point when the Father's love for the Son stopped? What about on the cross in Calvary? When Jesus said, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Surely the love stopped there when he was pouring his wrath and his curse for our sin upon his Son. No, not there.

Not for one moment did the Father stop loving the Son. In fact, again, we talk of the love of God being without change.

And so we might be hesitant in saying, but some have suggested and might be very true that in some respects, there was never, and you could say it is true, there was never a point when the Son was more beautiful in the sight of the Father than at that moment.

[14:20] Because that is at the moment where he was redeeming the church to himself. But his love never hesitated, never changed, never wavered at any point.

And parents know that. When they have to discipline their children in whatever way, their love doesn't falter. They don't. The fact that they have to discipline their children, they do it out of love. It's because they love them that they're doing it. So their love never, there's no stopping that love and then picks up again. And so it is with us. Jesus' love never, ever, ever falters or changes at any point, irrespective of who we are or what we are or what we've done.

Now, there are times maybe that we feel that that is love, that he has forgotten us or that he's forsaken us in some way. There are times we may not be conscious of that love and we think, does he really love me?

But he does. That love, that love never changes, whatever. And then it shows us here, Jesus tells us to abide in his love.

[15:34] And one, of course, one of the reasons that we should always remember that is we need to reflect upon what he has done for us. But verse 10 then goes on to show us, very briefly, the key

to abiding in that love.

And basically, it is obedience to God's word. You see, this love is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit.

And there's kind of no short, you see, Jesus talks about my love. Now, that love is never absent.

But, you know, there's a kind of, there's an ongoing cycle in this love.

First of all, Jesus has loved us. That's what the Bible tells us. We love him because he first loved us. He set his love upon us. As a result, we in turn love him.

And the evidence of our love to him is that we want to obey him. And that's the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian. You can have a very legalistic non-Christian.

[16 : 41] And somebody who is, when you look at their life and you say, you know, that person looks to me like a Christian. And in many ways, they stroke the T's and they dot the I's. But everything they do, it's in a legalistic way.

And it's driven by trying to be, trying to fulfill the law. But that's not the way the Christian does. The Christian is seeking to obey God's word because they want to.

Not because it's in a legal way, but it's driven by love. And that's why when we fail and when we let the Lord down and when we're disobedient, it hurts.

You and I know the hurt and the pain in our heart when we've sinned. And we go back to the Lord and we say, Lord, forgive us. And we're genuinely sorry because we love the Lord because he's loved us.

But when we are seeking to obey the Lord and following him and we are out of love, obeying him. There's a cycle in this love.

[17 : 53] His love continues to flow to us. And we're more and more conscious of that love. And the more we're conscious of that love, the more we're seeking to obey him.

So it's just it's an ongoing cycle. And of course, this is this is part of what makes us want us to draw ever closer to the Lord. And then Jesus says in verse 11, I have said these things to you.

These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. Just very briefly here. So often in this world, we have choices to make as Christians.

And sometimes there is two. We have two ways and we can make fleeting decisions. And sometimes the decision that we make is the wrong one because it's easy to the flesh and we know it goes against the Lord.

And other times we make the right decision, which is according to the word, but it's difficult to the flesh. But, you know, the thing is, when we make the wrong decisions, which we know are going against the Lord, but there may be pleasing to the flesh.

[19 : 05] We will never have the joy. We will never have Christian joy. And, you know, the backslidden Christian never knows the joy of the Lord. That joy has gone.

In fact, it's in a bad place because, as somebody said, the disobedient Christian doesn't love sin enough to enjoy fully its pleasure.

And doesn't love Christ enough to relish holiness. And there's an awful lot of truth in that. Now, an awful lot of, I would say, everybody in this world wants to experience joy.

But joy is fleeting. And the joy of the world is so fleeting. It's transient. And it is based largely upon circumstances and experiences.

Yes, I know that we can have joy. Sometimes people by nature are more joyful. That's the way they are. But Christian joy is something that is totally different. It is who Christ is.

[20 : 05] And this is the amazing thing. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you. When is Christ talking about this? On his way to the cross.

And he's talking about his joy. And his joy is a full joy because he's living in, not only in dependence upon the Father, but as a representative, in complete obedience to the Father.

And Christ is experiencing the fullness of that joy through that union with his Father. And, of course, it was part of the joy that was set before him, why he endured the cross.

But, you see, it's when we're living in Christ and with Christ that we experience his joy, irrespective of the circumstances.

And, you know, it's amazing how often God will fill, the Lord will fill his people with joy in the hardest of circumstances. When you go through the Bible, you will often find that the Lord has given our joy to his people.

[21 : 12] You find that the early disciples, the apostles, when they were being beaten up for preaching the gospel, they went away singing and they were counted it all joy to be beaten up for Christ.

And the Lord will often give the joy of his consolation in hard, difficult experiences. I don't know, maybe I shouldn't be saying that, but I know he shared it often.

And I remember him telling it to me, the late Alistair Murray, Alistair Corbett, and he had the great tragedy of losing a son at sea. And he said he never had a stranger experience than at the time that they had a worship.

He said, my heart was breaking within me at the loss of my son. But side by side with that, my heart was filled with a joy that was beyond any comprehension.

That the Lord filled him with his joy. Something he never, ever forgot. And I'm not talking out of turn because he told me, yes, he told me, he told me, he told it in fellowship, I remember.

[22 : 24] But that is Christian joy, which is unique. The world can never, ever experience that. It's impossible. It is only in Christ that we can have and know of that joy.

And so this is the joy that we learn to discover in this world and which will be part of glory forever. Because we're told in Psalm 16 that in his presence is fullness of joy.

Well, may we seek to abide in that love that we have given to us and that we will know his presence and power as we journey through life.

Lord of God, we pray to bless us. Give thanks for our time together and take us home safely. Give thanks as we heard from our brothers about just how wonderful it is to meet together.

And we do miss one another. Lord, we remember the Morrison family. And as we remember, last Friday we had the funeral of the late Catherine Morrison. It was so much part of our fellowship here.

[23 : 31] And so we pray for the Morrison family. We commit them to your care. We ask, Lord, that you will do us all good. And we pray for every effort that is made to further your cause and kingdom.

Remember, Lord, the work of Asian Outreach and Duncan Peters and down in Glasgow. And often a heavy work that can be so, we can feel so down because often see so little progress.

And yet every little while there are glimmers of light as breakthroughs are made. Lord, we pray for all who work in difficult situations like that. Watch over us and take away from us our sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.