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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Sixth Sunday of Easter |
| Year B RCL |

Acts 10:44-48

1 John 5:1-6

John 15:9-17

Psalm 98

**The Collect**

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*Amen.*

**The First Lesson**

**Acts 10:44-48**

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

**The Response**

**Psalm 98**

***Cantate Domino***

1 Sing to the Lord a new song, \*  
for he has done marvelous things.

2 With his right hand and his holy arm \*  
has he won for himself the victory.

3 The Lord has made known his victory; \*  
his righteousness has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.

4 He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to the house of Israel, \*  
and all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

5 Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; \*  
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.

6 Sing to the Lord with the harp, \*  
with the harp and the voice of song.

7 With trumpets and the sound of the horn \*  
shout with joy before the King, the Lord.

8 Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it, \*  
the lands and those who dwell therein.

9 Let the rivers clap their hands, \*  
and let the hills ring out with joy before the Lord,  
when he comes to judge the earth.

10 In righteousness shall he judge the world \*  
and the peoples with equity.

**The Epistle**

**1 John 5:1-6**

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

**The Gospel**

**John 15:9-17**

Jesus said to his disciples, “As the Father 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 my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. 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. 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. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

Have you ever done one of those “trust walks”? or heard about them from your children? So what happens is usually a group, for example, a bunch of sixth graders on a field education over night, or a church youth group, has individuals take turns being blindfolded and being led them around making sure they don’t get injured. It’s the sort of thing that makes me really nervous because it has potential catastrophe written all over it, but that said, the purpose is to learn to trust others, perhaps in a time when you have no compelling reason TO trust them. These people probably aren’t your enemies, but you may not be close friends with them either. Yet, at least in the case of the church youth group you learn to trust a friend in Christ, this then becomes not too different than trusting God in Jesus. You call people “friends”, because you trust them and they trust you.

This friend in Christ is based on the love that we see in the Gospel passage this morning. This is the love of which Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John. In the New Testament Greek, there are three words that get translated as the English word Love. There is ερος (eros), which is generally read as desire; there is φιλια (philia), which is brotherly or friendship love; and then there is αγαπη (agape), which is something entirely different, it is self-sacrificing love.

It may come as some surprise that in this Gospel passage where John relays that Jesus changes how he characterizes his relationship with the disciples from servants or slaves and master, to friends, he is also speaking of love as αγαπη not of φιλια, which you might expect for friends. Thus, where we expect brotherly, friendly love, we have love that is self-sacrificing.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. 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. 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. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

So instead, with the understanding of love/ αγαπη that we now have, this then reads, ‘my commandment is that you love sacrificially for the other, as I have loved sacrificially for you. ..There is no deeper sacrificial love than laying down a life for a friend. You are my friends if you do what I command you…. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my father…I am giving you these commands so that you may sacrificially love one another.’

Just as we read the concept of love through the lens of self-sacrificing in the Gospel, it’s the same word for love in the first letter of John; love there is also αγαπη, all αγαπη. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments.” This statement then becomes, ‘By this we know that we love sacrificially the children of God, when we sacrificially love God and obey his commandments. For to love God sacrifically is to obey his commandments.’ This love is not something casual. There is sacrifice involved in the loving.

We call people friends, because we trust them and they trust us. We call God in Jesus a friend because we trust God, and God trusts us. God trusts us because we understand that we are to love sacrificially and in so doing we are obeying his commandments.. obeying his commandments is to show sacrifical love to the other. This concepts then actually pushes harder against loving your neighbor as yourself, instead, one might read that you are to love your neighbor better than yourself. Love your neighbor sacrifically. This is a further stretch.

Finally, trusting the Triune God is, of course, trusting the spirit. It sounds almost farcical, like believing in Springtime when we have snow in April. But trusting the Spirit is realizing that God in Spirit, in Jesus, in Father Almighty shows up. Just like in a trust walk, we are never alone; we are always accompanied. And when the Spirit shows us, just like in a trust walk, it is scary and it is uncertain, but trusting in God’s love allows for unusual things. It allows the Spirit to show up in people when you don’t expect it. It allows for Gentiles to be baptized, “what is to prevent it?” - God does unusual things...

These things happen when we are friends with God, when we are friends in Christ with others, and when we trust the Spirit. When we embody a self-sacrificial loving life, we DO become the body of Christ in the world.

In the words of Julian of Norwich:

“Because of the great,

infinite love which God has for all humankind,

he makes no distinction in love between the blessed soul of Christ

and the lowliest of the souls that are to be saved...

We should highly rejoice that God dwells in our soul

and still more highly should we rejoice that our soul dwells in God.

Our soul is made to be God's dwelling place,

and the dwelling place of our soul

is God who was never made.”