"Remain in Christ’s Love"
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John 15:9-12 NIV
9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Diaries and letters are important elements of giving witness to historical events. They contain personal accounts about life. Often they are found in attics and closets.

A great example is John Adam’s letters to his wife, Abigail, from their courtship in 1762 to his presidency from 1797-1801. Truthfully, I don’t think he was ever at home. We have over one thousand documents and over 50 decades of diaries.

There’s no evidence that Abraham Lincoln kept a diary, but he wrote notes on small pieces of paper and tucked them into his coat pockets, his desk drawers, and his hat. Every major speech was composed first on scraps of paper.

Others wrote diaries like Harry Truman, Andy Warhol, C. S. Lewis, George S. Patton, Bob Dylan, Albert Camus, Soren Kierkegaard, Lewis Carroll, Ernest Hemingway, Virginia Woolf, Ronald Reagan, Marie Curie, Franz Kafka, Queen Victoria, and Anne Frank. We know more about their lives and inner thoughts because of their personal and certainly private writings.

Today’s scripture passage reads like a diary, maybe even an autobiography of Jesus. I think Jesus revealed three important parts of his relationship with his Father in heaven that can inform us about our relationship with Jesus.

First, the Father loves Jesus.

John 15:9
9 “As the Father has loved me…”

The fact of God the Father’s love for God the Son is stated in several places.

When Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 19-11, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34), a voice from heaven spoke:

Matthew 3:17
17 This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.
At the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36), the voice from heaven spoke again:

**Matthew 17:5**

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

Look again at John 15:9 and notice the verb tense. It’s past tense, but Greek is aorist which means it’s also present tense.

**John 15:9**

“As the Father has loved me…”

It’s impossible to reason about the relationship of God the Father and God the Son. We are imperfect while God is perfect. God is in a realm beyond our logic and comprehension. It’s good to realize the limitations of our human reasoning and human experience. We can only go so far. We can only measure certain things. We can’t answer all of the questions, or even know what questions to ask.

It was the God the Father’s love for the world that sent God the Son into existence (John 3:16), but how does God the Father’s love for God the Son show up?

Here’s a passage at the end of John 17 about this relationship of Father and Son. This is the prayer by Jesus to his Father right before Jesus is arrested.

**John 17:25-26**

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

Notice what Jesus said.

- The world doesn’t know the Father.
- Jesus knows the Father.
- They (the disciples and followers) know the Father sent Jesus.
- Jesus sought to make the Father known to the people.
- Jesus wants them to know about the Father’s love for him.
- Jesus will continue to make the Father known to the people (the cross and resurrection).
- Jesus will go to the cross so that the Father’s love for Jesus may be in the people.
- And that we may be in Jesus.
Here are the two other places where Jesus says the Father loves him.

**John 17:22-23**

22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

**John 17:24**

24 Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

I think it’s clear that Jesus knows about the love the Father has for him.

**Second, Jesus kept his Father’s commands.**

**John 16:10**

10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

Clearly, Jesus had a mission. His birth in Bethlehem was not random or by chance. The Father sent Jesus to earth. The Father gave the Son to us – to be born as a baby, to live, and then to die on the cross. The Father planned the mission and commanded Jesus to fulfill the mission.

Look at Jesus’s prayer again.

**John 17:4**

4 I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.

Eugene Peterson in the Message has this translation: “I glorified you on earth by completing down to the last detail what you assigned me to do.”

Jesus Christ kept the commands given to him by his Father.

It’s beyond our human ability to know the full extent of the mind of Christ when he decided to finish the work God gave him to do. Did he have concerns? It sounds like it. Did he have fears about facing the Romans? It doesn’t seem like it. When did he know the full extent of God’s mission for his life? We don’t know, but maybe after the baptism. We can’t be sure.

Here’s what we do know. Jesus had work to do when he lived on earth. He had a calling, a high calling indeed. And Jesus fulfilled the task completely.

**Third, Jesus remained in the Father’s love.**
John 15:10
10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

Last Sunday, I defined remaining (or abiding) with the phrase “sticking with another person” and “being at home with another person.” Dale Bruner in his commentary translates “remain in his love” this way:

John 15:10b Dale Bruner
10b “I have kept my Father’s commands and am making my home in his love.”

That’s a remarkable statement – “making my home in his love.” It sounds like a country western song. We understand what it means to keep our home in someone’s love, but the thought of how Jesus makes his home in God the Father’s love is beyond me.

Consider this: When Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son, the son returns home and is welcomed by his father. The father has compassion on his son, and celebrates his return. The father’s love is full of grace and mercy. The father loves his son, and we could say the son is able to make his home in his father’s love.

Now think a little further. This statement by Jesus in John 15 is not about his relationship with God the Father, but instead about our relationship with God the Father. As an example, Jesus establishes the relationship he has with God the Father, and then says we can have that same kind of relationship with him.

I’m going to restate the three important parts of the Son’s relationship with the Father, but this time reword it to describe our relationship with Jesus.

First, Jesus loves us.

John 15:9
9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

I’m sure the disciples didn’t know the fullest extent of Jesus’s love until Jesus died on the cross for them. Yet, the fact is this: Jesus loves me, this I know because the Bible tells me so.

Second, we are called to keep the commands of Jesus.

John 15:10
10 If you keep my commands

Love and obedience go hand in hand. They are forever connected.
Both of these two statements are true
- If you love Jesus, then you will obey Jesus.
- If you obey Jesus, then you are loving Jesus.

It’s humbling to say those two sentences. I can’t say it all of the time. I often fail in my obedience, but nevertheless, both sentences are true.

**Third, if we keep the commands, we can remain in the love of Jesus.**

**John 15:10**
10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love

The parable of the prodigal son always leaves me with two questions. Both questions are related to the issue of remaining in the love of Christ.

Did the younger son (who wanted his share of inheritance and after wasted it, comes back home) settled down and remain in the love of his father?

Jesus doesn’t continue the story so we have to decide for ourselves. We have to write the rest of the story.

Since I’m optimistic, I would write about a lost son who found himself through the acceptance and welcome and grace and love from his father. Maybe I think that way because I’m a father or maybe I think that way because I have experienced the love of Christ when I’ve messed up.

I don’t want the younger son to continue with his unfair demands, and instead remain in the arms of love. It might sound corny, but I believe in the transforming nature of love.

Did the older son (who resented his younger brother coming home and then refused to join the welcome party for him) resolve his feelings and remain in the love of his father?

I’m going to say the same thing: Jesus doesn’t continue the story so we have to decide for ourselves. We have to write the rest of the story.

Since I’m optimistic, I would write about an older son who comes to term with his personal problems of anger and zealously. He would be transformed by his father’s love, who leaves the party where joy and light and love prevailed, and goes into the darkness to listen to a complaining son. He would be transformed by his father’s love, who cared enough for him to speak the truth.

I don’t want the older son to continue with his bad attitudes and pride, and instead decide to remain in the arms of love.
It might sound corny, but I believe in the Pollyanna approach to life.

The word “Pollyanna” is one of the rare cases when a fictional word becomes real and is used in language. In 1913 Eleanor Porter wrote the novel, *Pollyanna*, a classic in children’s literature. The book’s success led to more books like *Pollyanna Grows Up* with a total of 13 books. They are also known as the “Glad Books.” Out of the series came the byword for a person who has an unfailingly optimistic outlook – a subconscious bias towards the positive often named the Pollyanna Principle.

The first book became a movie in 1920 starring Mary Pickford, and then again in 1960 with a Walt Disney film starring Hayley Mills.

The Pollyanna Principle has been classified as someone who remembers pleasant items more accurately than unpleasant ones. Those who want to dismiss a Pollyanna approach to life say it’s purely selective memory.

For me, a Pollyanna approach to life doesn’t mean to forget the recent deaths in New Zealand or the plane coming down in Ethiopia or the floods in Nebraska and Missouri or the hunger in so many homes across the world or the homeless in Kansas City or disabled children of mothers on drugs or those who are lost, lonely, and lifeless.

No, a Pollyanna approach to life means you really believe in the power of love, and that you really believe what Paul says in Romans 8:28.

**Romans 8:28**

28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

Who love Christ - which means remaining in Christ’s love!

Who have been called according to Christ’s purpose - which means you don’t believe life is a random mess, but instead, you affirm there is a plan!

God works for the good. I believe in a Pollyanna God who sees the evil and sin but still works for the good.