

Resurrection Response

May 17, 2020 / Sixth Sunday of Easter

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John 14:15-21 - Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him.

Dear Friends in Christ,

- Three weeks ago - Resurrection Conversations / Jesus on road to Emmaus
- Two weeks ago - Resurrection Abundance / I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly
- Next week - Resurrection Unity - Jesus praying that we would be one, even as he and his father are one
- Today - Resurrection Response

In his book on marriage called *Love and Respect*, the author Emerson Eggerichs contrasts what he calls The Crazy Cycle and the Love Cycle. The main premise of his book is that while both men and women desire to be both loved and respected, women have a particular desire to be loved, and the average man has a desperate need to be respected.

This is how he describes the Crazy Cycle in marriage.

“Life gets insane when a husband says to himself, “I’m not going to love that woman until she starts showing me some respect! I’ll not talk to her!”

Likewise, madness reigns when a wife says to herself, “I’m not going to respect that man until he earns my respect and starts loving me the way he should. I’ll teach him!”

Realize that the wife needs love just as she needs air to breathe. Picture, if you will, that the wife has an air hose leading to a “love tank.” When her husband steps on her air hose or pinches it in some way with unloving behavior, he will see her deflate before his eyes. He is stepping on her air hose, and she is crying out, “I feel unloved by you right now. Why are you doing this to me?”

On the wife’s side of the Love and Respect equation, she should picture her husband with his own air hose leading to his “respect tank.” As long as her respect is flowing through his air hose, he is fine, but if she starts to pinch or cut his air hose with sharp, critical remarks, his supply of respect will leak or be cut off, and he will react negatively because his deepest need is not being met.

When either spouse’s air hose is cut off in some way, the other will respond in kind. Both air hoses shut down, and the battle—the Crazy Cycle—is on!

(The author’s conclusion?) The secret to building a happy marriage begins by recognizing when you are on the Crazy Cycle.

Today, we want to recognize the signs of a crazy cycle, spiritually speaking. This cycle happens when we forsake the assembling of ourselves together. It happens when we drift away from the teaching and the preaching and the remembering of God’s Word. It happens when we stay away from our Lord’s Table for months at a time. Today’s three lessons give us a picture of at least three snapshots of a spiritual crazy cycle.

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1. *A failure to keep God's commandments (John 14)*
2. *A lack of repentance (Acts 17)*
3. *A lukewarm attitude towards doing what is good. (I Peter 3)*

In contrast to these three snapshots of what life looks like when we live according to our sinful nature, we present three snapshots of what life looks like when we live in response to the suffering, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is what might be called the love cycle, as explained by Jesus in the last verses of our Gospel lesson. **Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.**

This circle of blessing paragraph describes the spiritual process by which God makes us His own and continually confirms our relationship with Him. He loves us first in Christ, and in return we love Him back by loving our neighbors as much as we love ourselves. The love cycle is played out day after day, we make the sign of the cross, we remember we are the baptized and precious people of God, we cry out for mercy, we receive the forgiveness of sins, and then we go looking for opportunities to forgive one another. The love cycle is practiced in Divine Service, where God serves us with Word and Sacrament, and then we go looking for situations where we might serve one another. Three *Resurrection Responses*, if you will.

Resurrection Response #1 comes from the lips of Jesus Himself, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Jesus doesn't say to us today, If you love me, keep Moses' commandments. He says, if you love me, keep my commandments. Luther describes this love cycle, *Therefore I lay on you nothing but this, demand and desire only one thing, that you faithfully preach concerning me, have my word and sacrament laid upon you, and keep love and unity among yourselves for my sake, and suffer with patience whatever on this account comes upon you. These are the brief commandments that are called my commandments, which I lay upon you only as you love me and for my sake do them gladly.* This is what Jesus has to say about the work of the Holy Spirit, which is the process of sanctification. **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth.**

Another translation of the word for helper would be paraclete. A paraclete is one whose calling is to come alongside another. Jesus was our first paraclete, he came alongside of us in the flesh for a time, he gave himself once and for all as a sacrifice to end all Old Testament sacrifices.

On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus did what he promised, He sent another helper, he send a second paraclete, he sent the Holy Spirit to come alongside of us, to dwell inside of us, he does not leave us as orphans.

The kingdom of God is like an elderly woman whose husband died months ago, and she misses him more and more every day. As often as she goes to her favorite Scriptures for comfort, that often the Holy Spirit consoles her, He calms her down, He helps her to stop crying.

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The kingdom of God is like a man who is confused and afraid in these days of pandemic. They don't know who to believe, they're not sure what news is genuine and what might be fake. They're not sure whether to wear masks, whether or not to stay at home, whether or not to hug their grandchildren, and the list goes on. The Holy Spirit comes alongside of them in Word and in Sacrament, their love for their Savior is strong, they keep on living one day at a time, they treasure both the Law and the Gospel in their hearts. They can't explain it, but they know that they have it, the very peace of God which guards their hearts and surpasses all understanding.

Resurrection Response #1 was to be keeping the commandments of God not only because we are commanded to do so, but because the love of Christ is compelling us to do so. Resurrection Response #2 is repentance.

Resurrection Response #2 comes from the lips of Paul in Acts 17, The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. The context of this call to repentance is that Paul was reasoning with the believers in the synagogue, and he was debating with the philosophers and professor types out in the marketplace. He was pointing them to the creator of this universe and inviting unbelievers to seek out the one true God by way of repentance.

Repentance is to realize that we are in the wrong place in life, we are doing the wrong things, we are thinking the wrong thoughts, it is to be turned around and to be redirected towards God. Eugene Peterson says it this way, *The first step towards God is a step away from the lies of the world. The usual Biblical word describing the no we say to the world's lies and the yes we say to God's truth is repentance. John the Baptist cried out, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Jesus declared that every time a single sinner repents, all of heaven's angels break out in rejoicing.*

Paul says it this way in Acts. 17, **"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."** Dear friends in Christ, the worst problem we have in this land isn't the Virus, it isn't economic ruin, it isn't that some of us can't go to work, it's not that we can't go to church these days in larger numbers, and it certainly isn't that we can't go out to bars and restaurants. Our worst problem is the same as it has always been that our sins separate us from God, the wages of sin is death, the soul that sinneth, it shall die, we either repent or we perish. Repentance isn't so much a decision that we make, it is a desire that is worked inside of us as we engage with Holy Scripture and the Spirit convicts us of our guilt, as Jesus Christ holds us close, and as His grace melts away the stubbornness, it melts away the self-centeredness, it melts away the orneriness which causes so much trouble in our life together.

The kingdom of God is like a man who is anxious to turn over a new leaf these days. He's been watching church online, he's been thinking through what he learned as a child and in catechism class, and the Holy Spirit has convinced him that he's in the wrong place. This very day he cries out for help, and even before he cries out, help has arrived. He repents, and in that moment the angels and the archangels begin to rejoice. He apologizes to folks he has been hurting, and he learns again the beautiful truth that confession is good for the soul, it's good for the marriage, it's good for the congregation, it's good for the country.

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Resurrection response #1 was to be keeping the commandments of God, #2 was to be repenting not just once in a while but daily, and

Resurrection Response #3 comes from the pen of Peter, who asks rhetorically in I Peter 3, "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?" From beginning to end, Scripture cautions us about just going through the motions in the church, we are warned again and again about just sort of coasting through life with no particular fire in our bellies for the mission and the ministry of our local churches. In Revelation, Jesus had harsh words for the church in Laodicea, where the folks were neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm in their attitude towards God, and Jesus felt like just spitting them out of his mouth and being done with them.

The opposite of lukewarm Christianity is to be on fire for the mission of the church kind of Christianity. Our proposed and revised Mission Statement here at St. Paul Lutheran is that "Empowered by God's Word, we joyfully share the love of Jesus with all people." Our proposed vision statement foresees that we will be a vibrant and welcoming church serving the needs of members, community, and missions.

When Peter invites early Christians to be zealous for what is good, he went on to distinguish between two kinds of suffering. There is suffering for doing wrong and there is suffering for doing right. There is trouble that we bring on ourselves for going the wrong direction in life, and there is trouble that we accept as the cost of following Jesus.

In response to the suffering and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter invites us today to be zealous for doing what is good and right and salutary in these days. When he invites us to have hearts that regard Christ as holy, he means that we will be consciously putting Him in charge of every corner of our lives. To be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us is to be equipped for decisive moments in our discipleship.

The kingdom of God is like congregations of believers who are zealous for doing good works in response to all that Christ has done for them. It's like a group of women who keep on sewing masks, hundreds and hundreds of them, just because they want to. It's like husbands and wives who keep on being kind and patient with one another, because it's the right thing to do. It's like volunteers volunteering in a thousand different ways in church and in their community, in response to Christ crucified, risen, ascended, ruling, and coming again.

Christ is risen, therefore keep his commandments. Christ is risen, therefore repent. Christ is risen, therefore be zealous for what is good. In Jesus' Name. Amen.