

Easter B-5, 2009

John 15: 1-8

May 10, 2009

Title: Abide is a Where Word

Grace and peace to you from God our father and from the lord Jesus Christ.

Our Christ Care group has been studying Facing Your Giants by Max Lucado, the life story of King David, an unlikely choice for king.

Ancient Israel searches for a successor to King Saul among the sons of Jesse. Eliab is the first born; he is big, stately, fits a kingly job description quite well. Instead after reviewing all the qualified sons, little, last and least son David is chosen. And the justification for choosing David is this:

GOD SEES ON THE INSIDE. WHAT MATTERS IS NOT OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LIFE WITHIN. David possessed such an inner quality. He had the right stuff.

With David Israel comes to an important crossroads.

I wished you could have been at our April Church Council meeting. Our leaders heard three reports, all at important crossroads. Our Mnene Parish in Zimbabwe gave an overview of their efforts here over the last 8 years. As this effort has grown our Council recommends the Mnene team form into a not-for-profit similar to the Serving Cup. Our council authorized joining into Project Connect, an immersion experience for young adults who may be interested in future service in the church. Casey Cep will be with us beginning in July.

Our Council also reviewed our Giving Team's plan for the coming year, by which we will seek to grow our response to Christ.

I mention all that because such stuff can invite a community to look inward, to discern why we are called together in this place.

From one perspective John 15 is part of Jesus' first and only church council meeting. What our Lord says to them is most telling. He doesn't say a single word to them about budgets, about personnel, about how you are organized, he doesn't say anything about being happy.

If there is one consistent message from our Lord Jesus it's abide in me. Abide in me and you will bear much fruit. Jesus talks about the inner life—staying connected to him—and the outer life—the life that flows from life with him—greater works you will do.

I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. THOSE WHO ABIDE IN ME AND I IN THEM WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT.

Jesus has other things to say, but the instruction about how to live as his children, this is his only message to us. As we live in him, we will grow and become strong branches. As if to say, being precedes doing; the inner life precedes the outer life.

To give off lasting, enduring, sustaining fruit, you need your soul nourished. Can't have an impact till you've been impacted. You'll wither and decay unless you are regularly fed. A branch can't will its own growth; grow only as it's connected to the vine.

Can you carry the weight of it all? The job, the family, the people, the problems....without support beyond your own? Trying to be the vine, holding up the branches???

We are the branches; He is the vine. Abide in me.

Abide is such an old fashioned word. "I've been abiding with my school work. How are you doing? I'm abiding for long hours in my office. We are looking for a place for Casey Cep to abide this summer."

Abiding has to do with persevering, with lasting, with staying with it. Jesus abides, Jesus lasts, Jesus endures, Jesus continues, Jesus hangs on—this is the ongoing Easter miracle. Today, Jesus promises to abide with Sydney Elizabeth Worrell and with Ella Grace Trenner. Jesus promises to abide with Betty Killian, who died in Christ last Sunday.

What kind of word is abide? Abide is a where word. We abide where the Lord gathers us.

When our daughter Elizabeth went off to school on the bus that first day of kindergarten, two very anxious parents awaited her arrival home from school on that bus. At that age, children are so short. You can't see them walk down between the seats. Our neighbor Larry, also a kindergartener, got off the bus. Not our daughter.

Oh no, she is still at school. That poor child. Left at school on the first day of kindergarten. How terrible. She may never again want to go to school. The bus driver opened her window and told us to come on the bus. Sally got on the bus. There was our little one, sitting on the bus.

Elizabeth had no interest in leaving the bus. She wanted to stay there. She came off kicking and screaming. Her mother had to literally pry her off the bus. There is a picture of abiding.

Hanging on to the vine; taking our place on the bus; going for the full ride. We want with all our hearts to be loved. This is where we are loved. Church is another word for love

Right at this altar Jesus gives himself to us...so we can stay on the bus. He comes to us, he is in us. This is what we are made for. For to dwell in him is to see him in others. We are to see Christ in others and love them. Christ in you (NAME THEM)

Abide is a where word. The bus, the bank, the classroom, the office cubical, the grocery store, the bedroom, the board room. ABIDE IN ME AS I ABIDE IN YOU

Abide is also a when word. Abiding comes in the humdrum routines of our waking hours. While it may look uneventful is it anything but. To abide is to leaven the world with steadiness without skidding into the blight of taking everything for granted.

Dean Lueking tells of parents at an Alaska airport. They were waiting there to come back home having just buried their twenty something son. Wrapped in a blanket of grief and loss, walking

toward them was a couple arriving from China, with their newly adopted son. These parents saw in the arrival of this child a sign of what they could only see by faith, a faith that outlasts heartache.

Such faithful seeing comes only from faithful abiding. In a world trying to make it on sound bites and seasonal obsessions, is there a better gift than abiding?

He in us and we in him.

Abide is a when and where word. He is the abiding vine; we are privileged to be the abiding branches.