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| **Fifth Sunday of Easter** |
| **Year CRCL** |

**The Collect**

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**The First Lesson**

**Acts 11:1-18**

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, `Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I replied, `By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a second time the voice answered from heaven, `What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, `Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.' And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, `John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life."

**The Psalm**

**Psalm 148**

***Laudate Dominum***

1 Hallelujah!
Praise the  Lord from the heavens; \*
praise him in the heights.

2 Praise him, all you angels of his; \*
praise him, all his host.

3 Praise him, sun and moon; \*
praise him, all you shining stars.

4 Praise him, heaven of heavens, \*
and you waters above the heavens.

5 Let them praise the Name of the  Lord; \*
for he commanded, and they were created.

6 He made them stand fast for ever and ever; \*
he gave them a law which shall not pass away.

7 Praise the  Lord from the earth, \*
you sea-monsters and all deeps;

8 Fire and hail, snow and fog, \*
tempestuous wind, doing his will;

9 Mountains and all hills, \*
fruit trees and all cedars;

10 Wild beasts and all cattle, \*
creeping things and winged birds;

11 Kings of the earth and all peoples, \*
princes and all rulers of the world;

12 Young men and maidens, \*
old and young together.

13 Let them praise the Name of the  Lord, \*
for his Name only is exalted,
his splendor is over earth and heaven.

14 He has raised up strength for his people
and praise for all his loyal servants, \*
the children of Israel, a people who are near him.
Hallelujah!

**The Epistle**

**Revelation 21:1-6**

I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

**The Gospel**

**John 13:31-35**

At the last supper, when Judas had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

SERMON

“*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another*.”

It’s all about love.

When Jesus gave this commandment to love, it wasn’t at a random time in his ministry. Jesus said this to his disciples the night before he was crucified. It was his final lesson to them before he died.

So, he wasn’t going to waste everyone’s time by telling them something that wasn’t important.

Instead, he goes to the heart of Christian faith, and he is saying to them, before I die, this is what you really, really need to know, love one another as I have loved you.

We need to understand how the word love is used in this gospel. It’s not the: I love my job, or I love Big Macs, or I love Elvis Presley kind of love.

Jesus tells us that, “*by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*”

Love your neighbor, love yourself, love your enemy. Love your family, love your annoying co-worker, love everybody! Just love!

Because the love Jesus commands is sacrificial, unconditional, and practical.

**Love is a sacrifice.**

We all know parents who would eat the dry ends of the bread and give their kids the soft slices in the middle or eat last to make sure everyone gets all the food before them. When there is a disaster, we see people lining up to give blood at the blood bank, or they give their hard-earned money and volunteer their precious time, all for someone they will probably never meet. Unselfishly sacrificing yourself so another person will have a better life.

And isn’t this why Jesus died on the cross, so we could live in a beautiful relationship with God?

Jesus gave up everything, his power, his majesty, his glory,

His own life, so that we could live.

There was no limit to Jesus’ sacrifice because there was no limit to his love for us.

**Love is unconditional.**

Jesus didn’t die for us because we deserved it. He didn’t die for us because we had somehow earned God’s grace and love. There is nothing that you or I have ever done that has made us deserving of a relationship with God. Instead, he died for us even when we were far away, hiding, and lost from him.

We all make mistakes in our lives, but God never leaves us.

Jesus didn’t set conditions on his love. He never gave us a list that said, here are 10 things to do for me before you receive my love.

God’s love doesn’t work that way. We never have to prove ourselves worthy of his love. God’s love is unconditional.

Some people seem to have an unreasonable expectation of church, that it should be, or is full of, only holy people, living perfect lives. But we are a church of just people, loved, but also frail, broken, and vulnerable.

So, because Jesus loves us despite our weaknesses and failings, we are called to love others unconditionally too.

In our world today, one of the most beautiful and precious gifts we can offer is kindness. We need more kind people. We need more kind Christians. We live in a harsh and judgmental society, we immediately think the worst of someone, we are quick to anger, we criticize the poor, and we build walls to close ourselves off.

But we are called to a different way of living.

We are called to share God’s unconditional love to all we know, especially those who make a mess of their lives. After all, that is what God has done for us. He is gentle with us. He doesn’t hold grudges.

**Love is practical.**

What are the greatest examples of love you can think of?

Maybe something grand like being proposed to at Disneyland, or a wedding in a vineyard in California, or love songs, and roses. But in reality, love is practical. The family caring for their aging parent. The carpenter working six days a week, at 4 or 5 different jobs so his children will have a better life. The spouse who has to carry groceries up 35 steps to the house. That is practical, ordinary, everyday love.

Jesus’s death on the cross was also practical. It wasn’t a glorious time in his life. He was alone. He was in pain. He had to grit his teeth and get on with it. That is practical, real love in action.

We too are called to practical love. We can’t avoid those who need help. We’re not taught to close our eyes and walk the other way.

So, Jesus has a new commandment for us; not a new commandment to love, but a new commandment to love one another as he has loved us. Sacrificially, unconditionally, and practically.

This is the life that we are called to.

It’s all about love.

E pule kākou, let us pray.

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn

but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the

strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that

all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of

Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominion and

glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**Prayers:**

We pray for Summer Baclaan who suffered a miscarriage and is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

We pray for the passing of John Linder and his grieving widow Marci Sherwood, friends of Peg and Paul.

We pray for Karen Sakurai who had a small car accident.

We pray for Fr. Kaleo Patterson suffering from cancer but continues to feed the hungry at St. Stephen’s in Wahiawa.

We pray for St. John’s Kula on Maui who is making a decision today on who their new rector will be, and we pray that Fr. Hau’oli will be called.

We pray for Faye’s aunty Lillian Sato, who lived a long life and passed away at the age of 103.

We pray for Kumu Kaleolani’s 70th birthday.

We pray for Fr. Steve McPeek and his ‘ohana that they receive God’s love and peace.

**Announcements:**

Welcome to Steve McPeek and his ohana visiting from Germany.

**Vicar’s Message**

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Busy week meeting with Chaminade colleagues to plan our summer courses, a meeting with the Commission on Native Hawaiian Ministry as we have submitted a resolution to the General Convention for including Queen Lili’uokalani in Lesser Feasts and Fasts, a pastoral meeting for a fellow Episcopalian who needed uplifting, a meeting for part-time clergy in the Diocese, and a burial at Punchbowl. All of this was balanced with enjoyable Mah Jong, ‘ōlelo, and hula! This Saturday is our Camp Mokuleia day camp from 9am to 5pm (stay as short or as long as you like)! Bring sunscreen, snacks, towels, fishing poles, and whatever you need (remember, no pets allowed). Lunch will be at noon in the cafeteria and is included in our cost. Be sure to connect with a driver today if you need a ride. Blessings to you this week and do something small for someone to make them smile! Malama pono!