

5.10.21

Vicar Paul

I've been watching a miniseries on HBO called *It's a Sin*. And it chronicles the lives of five young gay men who were living in London during the HIV and AIDS epidemic with their friend Jill. Many of them were rejected by their families after their coming out. And so they moved to London to find a new life. But in the show they find their friend Jill, who sort of seems like a motherly role for them, to help care for some of them as they pass away. And so it's just a great story of just love, just the love that we have for one another, and the ways in which friends go to extremes to love others. And just as Jill assumed a mother role to her friends on Mother's Day, I want to say Happy Mother's Day to everyone. It's a good moment. Whether you are a chosen mother, maybe you are a mother, or the ones who have assumed a mother role, and especially those this morning who may be grieving or maybe have a strained relationship with their mother. Know that we are here for you at Advent. And the EEET actually has flowers this morning and candy, so you can, if you want to, come by today and get some flowers. That'd be awesome. I'd love to see your face.

And so this morning. The Gospel text. I was debating whether or not I wanted to preach another love sermon, but it is here. Last week in the Gospel texts, we were told Jesus is the vine and you are the branches. And this week we pick up where we left off last week. We hear this new commandment that Jesus gives His followers, his disciples, and you probably recognize this verse. It's Maundy Thursday--it's technically the text for Maundy Thursday, so we get it here just a couple days before which is Thursday, the holy ascension day. So it makes sense as to why we get this. But I think it's important for us to go in our little time machines and let's go back to Maundy Thursday. The story is of Jesus giving his disciples that commandment as he is about to be crucified and be turned over. Thomas will doubt him, Judas will betray him, Peter will deny him. His disciples are going through stuff. They're trying to understand what is next. And this morning, Jesus gives them this commandment, "Love one another just as I have loved you."

This commandment, "Love one another, just as I have loved to you." "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." So it's Jesus's call to his disciples. He's chosen his disciples. I remember the story of Simon Peter getting called to leave his parents behind in their fishing business. Nathanael who asks what good can come from Nazareth? After his death, Jesus will appear to them on the beach in the huddled room just a couple hours after his resurrection. And in the gospel texts this morning, Jesus is inviting us into a friendship and extending an invitation to an everlasting life. A friendship and a relationship that we can turn to and who will walk alongside us through our journey, through life, and who calls on us to love one another. Just as I have loved you.

And so I was thinking this morning. I'm gonna ask you to close your eyes. Who are the friends in your life? Why are they your friends? You may open your eyes. I asked these questions because I think it's important this morning to understand that Jesus is doing something a bit different. And he's flipping our own understanding of what a friend is. During his time, friends

oftentimes, they're still even today one could argue, there's like a quid pro quo. Like, if I'm your friend and then you can give me something. But this morning there's no hierarchy. There's no coercion. It's a loving relationship. That Jesus is inviting us in to. That we love one another. Jesus will forgive the disciples who turned on him, which might be hard for some people. But Jesus chose forgiveness and love, and to humanize each other. Realizing our shortcomings and our failures, he modeled this idea of forgiveness for us, that we are loved children. We are beloved, we are called by our name. And Jesus doesn't leave our side. Jesus is always there. Even when we're feeling anxious or depressed, Jesus is there inviting us into a friendship, a relationship. And he reminds us of this gift of love and grace.

As I was reflecting on this text this week, I couldn't help but think of my favorite childhood movie. It is *Toy Story*. If you're familiar with it, great. If you're not, I'm encouraging you to have a movie day today on this rainy day. It's a story about these toys that come to life when humans aren't around. But there's like an unofficial theme song of this movie. You've probably heard it and so I'm not gonna sing it because I don't want to get in trouble with copyright, and I don't have a great voice. But I'm going to say it to you.

You've got a friend in me.
When the road looks rough ahead
And you're miles and miles
From your nice warm bed
Just remember what your old pal said
You've got a friend in me

You've got troubles, I got 'em too.
There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you
We stick together and see it through
'Cause you've got a friend in me

I love that song. Jesus is a friend with us. Jesus is inviting us into a relationship. Jesus never leaves our side and is there when we're grieving, feeling anxious, or whatever we're feeling this morning or in the days to come. Just know you have a friend, a companion who's someone you can talk to. So it's not necessarily love that I talked about this morning, but instead I'm talking about this friendship, this relationship. You've got a friend in me.

Amen