

## **This Gospel Moment**

May 17, 2020

The 6th Sunday of Pentecost

Rev. Patricia Wagner – Maple Grove UMC

### **Acts 2: 42-47**

<sup>2</sup> Those first communities of believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

<sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

<sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds<sup>[a]</sup> to all, as any had need.

<sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple.

They broke bread at home<sup>[b]</sup> and ate their food with glad and generous<sup>[c]</sup> hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved

### **John 14: 15-21**

<sup>5</sup> "If you love me, you will keep<sup>[a]</sup> my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,<sup>[b]</sup> to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees nor recognizes the Spirit. You know the Spirit, because the Spirit abides with you, and will be in<sup>[c]</sup> you.

*18 "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in God, and you in me, and I in you. 21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by God, and I will love them and reveal myself to them*

A Channel of Christ's Peace...  
Not the best word to describe me last Sunday night,  
one more freeze warning,  
and I had to go out once more and cover my azalalias  
which were just blooming.

I was fed up,  
    with the shut-in ness,  
    worrying about how to have worship if  
        only 10 people can gather  
When will that change.  
    What if it doesn't change for months?  
        What will become of the church.

and now an endlessly cold spring  
    that seemed determined to kill my flowering bushes,

.  
I was loudly grouching,  
    and in that very moment two members of this  
        congregation happened to walk past my house.

Hello, they said,  
    and stopped and we talked at safe distance  
And it was better,  
    The community of faith pulled me from the brink.

We are out walking more,  
and, even through our masks, talking to one another.

Like the flowers, communities are springing up  
where there were just houses.

or hospitals.

Doctors become family for their isolated patients,  
and then have to live in constant fear of losing them:

One Midwest physician that went to New York  
to help out wrote this poem.

He was  
too tall  
for the  
Army  
hospital bed  
and had  
an eagle  
tattooed on  
his arm  
he was  
older than  
60 and  
looked  
like a  
biker the  
kind of  
guy who  
thought he

could still  
take anybody  
the kind  
of guy  
who loved  
to tell  
people he  
wasn't afraid  
of anything  
so it  
really shook  
me when  
he spoke  
in a  
voice as  
small as  
my daughter's  
asking me  
if he  
was going  
to die.

That same physician wrote a text message to a daughter,  
he'd left back home weeks ago,  
but accidentally sent it to 50 of his new hospital  
colleagues instead.

*I received almost fifty return messages of love, he said,  
Hope at least a few actually meant it.*

And maybe, we are, in a small way  
waking up to that in this pandemic.  
That we are kin, that love is what binds us,

that love is what saves us.

Imagine those who heard Jesus,  
how parched their souls,  
so many poor, left out,  
unrecognized as persons of value  
by either state or religious leaders  
and comes this teacher, this healer  
who cares for them,  
defends their dignity,  
their importance  
who loves them.

Love is the nature of God,  
it is the way in which we are inhabited by God.  
Its the truest reality there is

He tells them that the love  
he is offering them  
is God's own love,

And in this poignant moment  
when he about to leave for Jerusalem and death,  
and the way ahead for the disciples  
is lonely and uncertain,

Jesus says, *I will not leave you orphaned,*  
*<sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will no longer see me,*  
*but you will see me;*  
*On that day you will know that I am in God,*  
*and you in me, and I in you.*

21

*the Paraclete, the advocate, the mediator,*

*the Spirit of Truth, will come to you  
and you will know her because  
she abides with you,  
do you hear that, she already abides with you,  
and will be in you.*

and "You" here is plural  
you, community of the faithful,

The first communities, according to our lesson in Acts

"devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching  
and fellowship, to the breaking of bread  
and the prayers"

To teaching - seek to know and understand what Jesus taught

To being together, to rejoice with those who rejoice  
to weep with those who weep.

*to the breaking of the bread.*  
sharing a meal in the name and spirit of Jesus.

to pray for one another.

and from those 4 simple practices of community,  
flowed such acts that filled the people with awe. .  
They share all they have so that no one wanted.  
and ate with glad and generous hearts  
and had good will for all the people.

and, it says, daily persons were being added to their numbers  
of those who were being saved.

Salve- made well, and whole.

Justin Martry was a Christian philosopher(ca. 100–ca. 165),  
of the early church.

said Jesus' way, as practiced in community,  
"mended lives."

We who formerly . . . valued above all things the acquisition of  
wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a  
common stock, and communicate to everyone in need;

*We who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of  
their different manners would not live with men of a different  
tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live as family with them,  
and pray for our enemies .*

All this saving, this mending, by these small bands of Christians.

Remember my ranting?

My worrying about how we would gather,  
if we can't in groups of more than 10.

Well, I've realized, Jesus just had 12,  
If it was good enough for the beginning,  
might it not be good enough in 2020  
Perhaps this is exactly what we need  
to get back to our roots  
to the kind of Christian community  
that started it all.

100 years ago,  
people saw in the grove of maple trees here,  
place in which to nourish the spirit,  
They came together in small numbers first,

pooled their resources  
and met for study,  
shared in fellowship  
broke bread  
and prayed for one another.  
and for what God hoped for them.

What if this 100th year is one where  
we do this again,  
newcomer and long-timers  
individuals and families,  
to study and grow together  
Come together in small groups, online, perhaps in person  
right here,  
to study, to reveal our joys and sorrows  
and pray for one another and the world  
sharing what we have, who we are  
and to grow as disciples of Jesus.  
with good will to all the people.

Perhaps, this is the Gospel Moment,  
the Good News.  
the opportunity for Maple Grove 2.0  
to build a new community  
from which comes healing, hope,

Wouldn't that be something.

Amen.

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