

## Remain in My Love

✦ complete joy (vv.9-11)

✦ enduring confidence (vv.12-17)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, all blessed by a mother through whom God gave you life:

Every year at this time the warnings go out for preachers: Mother's Day can be very difficult for some. As much as I appreciate the reminders, they really don't go far enough. We need to be aware that this special day can lose its luster if a couple is suffering from infertility or sterility. But there are millions in our country now who wake up to the sorrow that they took the life of their unborn baby. One woman says she grieves on every anniversary of her abortion, but still insists that no one can take away her "right to choose." Once I heard a lawyer debating a philosopher about a father's lack of parental rights. He cannot keep his child alive, but he is required by law to support that child if the mother chooses to let it live. "It's just bad law," the lawyer argued. My friend and classmate, Brad Mattes at Life Issues Institute, has counseled many men grieving the loss of their unborn children, sometimes because of their own insistence on abortion, often because they had no say. Wherever God gives love and life, the old evil foe is determined to destroy it. Some of his minions make no secret of their love for Satan and their hatred toward God. And along comes Jesus, the Lord of life and the Lover of our souls. With one sentence He silences all our fears and soothes our heartaches too: **Remain in My Love – My Love** for...

✦ complete joy (vv.9-11)

*"As the Father has loved me, so also I have loved you. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you treasure my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have treasured my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."* (W.P.) Jesus gives more than fickle happiness based on happenings. Jesus gives **complete joy**.

That's why this is such a fine Gospel lesson for Mother's Day, especially for those whose mothers abandoned them or were distant and uncaring. This Gospel lifts the hearts of silent sufferers of infertility or sterility. Hearts that miss their mother or yearn for a mother's love can find great comfort in God's endearing, enduring kindness and tender mercy. His divine heart beats beyond the best of the kindest and most caring mothers. God said through His holy prophet Isaiah: *"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! <sup>16</sup>See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands..."* (Isaiah 49:15f)

Love beyond mother-love is what the Father has for His eternal Son Jesus Christ. And that same eternal love Christ brings to us for our **complete joy**. He wants to fill our hearts to overflowing even through our tears of heartache and loss. Jesus *treasured* His Father's commands all the way to the cross. There He poured out His blood to wash away the sins of all, including murderers, abortionists and careless pro-lifers who fail to pray and take a stand for life. Now **Remain in My Love** by treasuring God's commands. God's commands shield us from sadness and grief caused by sin.

But there's another reason dear to the heart of God. Earlier Jesus said, *"Everyone will know that you are my disciples because of your love for each other."* (John 13:35 Luther) Faith in Jesus shows in love for others, especially the family of God. "Faith alone saves, but faith is never alone." (Pieper) As we remain on Christ the vine, our faith goes to work in the action adventure of our everyday lives. The Holy Spirit reminded us last week (John 15:1-8) how fine wine comes from stressed vines in dry, rocky soil.

***“In this world you will have trouble,”*** Jesus warns His disciples in the next chapter. Worldly trouble always tempers the joy we have in Jesus. But since He is our good and gentle Shepherd, each of us can confidently lie down and get up in the certainty, ***“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.”*** (Psalm 23:5) At last, ***“the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”*** (Isaiah 51:11 NIV84) This world’s dry desert keeps sapping the moisture from our joy. But Jesus keeps refreshing us with His Word and sacrament. “Free refills!” Pastor Gawrisch likes to tell his Catechism classes. Yes, ***“in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*** (John 16:33 NIV84) Jesus displaces life’s sadness with **complete joy** and...

### ✠ enduring confidence (vv.12-17)

***“This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this: that he lays down his life for his friends.”*** (W.P.)

Hollywood has had great success corrupting the meaning of “love.” Our American culture talks more about “love” than any other. Yet our view is 180° out of phase with God’s true ἀγάπη-love in Christ. Our “love” songs and “romantic” movies are filled with pain because our best view of “love” is based on “loving you as long as you keep doing what makes me feel good. Fail that, I go to war.” ***“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*** That’s self-sacrificing love. ***“And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”*** (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:15 NIV84)

Living for yourself is dangerous and deadly. ***“Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life.”*** (John 12:25 W.P.) The word translated “life” here is *psyche*, the self, the mind, where decisions are decided and choices made. Christ says those who love to have their own way, demand their own choices, follow their own will are self-destructing.

The Inuit of Canada and Greenland have an unusual way to hunt bears. They take a piece of wolf bone, sharpen both ends to a point, coil it, and then freeze it in blubber. They place it on the path bears follow, and then wait. After a while a bear waddles down the path, spots the blubber, and swallows it. He just killed himself. Every step, every movement, causes that sharpened bone to slash his big bear stomach inside. The Inuit follow the bear. When he finally collapses from internal bleeding, they pounce on him. The person who insists “my way or the highway” is destroying himself every step he takes.<sup>1</sup>

What a contrast Christ’s love for us! Remember the story of the two rangers surveying after a forest fire? They found the charred body of a mother hen standing rigid by a burned out tree trunk. One of them tapped her with his foot, and she fell over. Out rushed a bunch of tiny chicks. She had spread her wings to shield her little ones as the fire raged around her. So determined was her mother-love!

That’s what Jesus did for us by placing Himself between us and the fiery wrath of God. We play with matches whenever we love ourselves instead of God and our neighbor. We fight and quarrel like lightning that sets the forest ablaze. And there stands Jesus, calling us to come and find shelter under His wings. He does not ask who started it? He knows who’s to blame, but He willingly took our shame on Himself to give us the **enduring confidence** to do the same for each other. ***“You are my friends if you continue to do the things I command you. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, because everything that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will endure, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. <sup>17</sup>These things I am commanding you so that you love one another.”*** Here we stay in Christ. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Dunn, Ronald. *Surviving Friendly Fire*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001, pp. 38f.

W.P ~ Wartburg Project translation in popular review. Other Scriptures: NIV84. New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Audio: [www.wels.us/newlife](http://www.wels.us/newlife) . Preacher’s Apprentice: [m.cordes@comast.net](mailto:m.cordes@comast.net) . 180 County Rd F – Shoreview, MN 55126