



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR B, MAY 9, 2021  
ACTS 10:44-48; 1 JOHN 5:1-6; JOHN 15:9-17; PSALM 98

## GODSTUFF

So, I saw an article this week entitled, “Are You a Mystic?” I was intrigued. Which is silly, because if you know me, you know I am sorely NOT a mystic. I’m the busy-making-myself-busy, extrovert, monkey mind, antsy, FOMO woman of these times. But in the, therefore appropriate, habit of distracting myself, I thought, “Well, heck, maybe I am more mystical than I think – so I’m taking the quiz!”

Now I won’t run through the whole thing with you here. It’s very subjective. BUT, the last two items struck me:

1. You believe love is the source of life.
2. You don’t know everything.<sup>1</sup>

NOW we’re talking. If these are criteria, then I’m the veritable Wizard of Oz! Not because

I’m me, Nancy, but because I’m a follower of the mystic who is Jesus...

Jesus, who spent three years teaching us, and showing us, using parables so we could know and understand – and still finding the disciples, US, kind of block-headed – we surely don’t know everything – and **yet** he finds us WORTHY. That’s what today’s Gospel says. It’s really what the *whole* Gospel says, but today, Jesus makes it very simple, and very clear. We are love-worthy. We are of God-stuff, and God is love.

This is the love the mystics talk about, with words that can’t fully capture the deep ineffableness of the Divine Love experience that Jesus gives: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” ABIDE. Live. Be. This Divine LOVE is the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gaia.com/article/am-i-a-mystic-10-signs>

source of life and is the only way to live in Jesus.

Today's reading is from the Gospel of John, where the word "love" appears 57 times, more than in the other three Gospels combined. A recurring theme of love in John's Gospel is that loving Jesus means keeping his commandments. That sounds rather more dogmatic than like a mystic thread, but if we go back to "a mystic believes love is the source of life," well, Jesus is pretty explicit on that in today's passage: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

Abide, the source... as Jesus is even more explicit about what the *commandment* is. He says: "THIS is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Very clear. The Jesus Movement is about love.

The mystics, from Augustine to Francis to Hildegard to Merton, tap into that love, the deep mystery of our oneness, of the Divine whole that is pure love, the oneness that leads us to love one another as Jesus loves us. I know that some of you are mystics, some have had profound experiences, and some of you are maybe more like me, and it is not a hierarchy; it takes all kinds of us, just the way

God made us – and we all are finding our own experience of God's love, and not just how we experience it, but how we are MADE of it, and how we experience how ALL are made of it.

We hunger for this love, because it is our genesis, and because God's love is calling to us, just as Jesus calls to us: **Abide in my love.** It is a beckoning. We are responding to it at the very core of our beings, like drawn to like. Some of those who tap into it deeply inside, who experience that oneness in powerful ways, we call mystics. But all of us here who are followers of Jesus are on this path of abiding in his love. I find great wisdom in how Sufi teacher and author Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee describes it:

*"Mystics may be drawn inward, but the oneness of the divine also embraces the outer world. ...Mystics are also involved in the demands of everyday life. One of Christianity's most loved mystics, St. Teresa of Avila, worked tirelessly founding convents and looking after her nuns, while at the same time mystical prayer took her into ever deepening states of inner absorption, oneness and ecstasy... 'God,' St. Teresa would say, 'lives also among the pots and pans.'"*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mysticism-living-loves-oneness\\_b\\_1304518](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mysticism-living-loves-oneness_b_1304518)

And so does love. The pots and the pans and the oppressed and the sick – and the Cross. Love lives in these places.

Remember that Jesus lived in a culture that said he was going against God's law if he healed someone on the Sabbath. And we know Jesus didn't believe that, because he lived and taught that God is Love, and the depth of that love demanded more than law. And now we live in a majority culture that says you're going against God's law if you support social assistance programs for your neighbor. We're not much different, are we?

I feel how sadly the answer to that is “no, we're not” in our world at this time, and historically. A Western-culture version of Christianity often does, like many in Jesus' day, make God tiny enough to be contained by human laws and prejudices – a God we can control – rather than living into our fullest being as part of the wild, expansive, unfathomable love that gives birth to us, and into which Jesus invites us to abide.

When we hoard a tiny God – when we make idols of our texts and dogma and tribalism and prejudices – we rob our Spirits of the joy that is inherent in our shared oneness with the Divine. But if we could sink into that vast Divine love, we would know the joy Jesus came to bring. We go around thinking that loving everyone is too hard. There are too

many people we disagree with, too many who don't look like us, too many people who might take what I want, too many people for me to have to care about!

But Jesus says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” He held nothing back. And he tells us, “I have said these things to you so that *my joy* may be in you, and that *your joy may be complete.*”

JOY? Jesus is saying these things to his disciples, to US, during what is known as his “Farewell Discourse” in the Gospel of John. HE is saying these things on the night he is going to be arrested and taken to his death! But he calls this ultimate act of love JOY. And tells us that joy is what our abiding in him by loving each other will bring.

Are you a follower of Jesus? His Gospel is the story of God loving so much that Godself chooses to abide with us, in our flesh, in Jesus, in this world. We ARE one, we ARE God-stuff. When we love one another the way Jesus loves us, THAT is when our joy is complete.

The mystic Meister Eckhart mourned: “How long will grown men and women in this world keep drawing in their coloring books

an image of God that makes them sad?”<sup>3</sup>  
Would that we would rather join creation in oneness with the Divine, like today’s Psalm:

*Let the rivers clap their hands,  
and let the hills ring out with joy before  
the LORD!*

That’s what abiding in Jesus’ love brings out. It doesn’t deny that there is pain in this life. Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the very Book of Joy says:

*“Discovering more joy does not, I’m  
sorry to say, save us from the*

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*inevitability of hardships and heartbreaks... Perhaps we are just more alive. ... We have hardship without becoming hard. We have heartbreak without being broken.”<sup>4</sup>*

Mystic or no, I don’t know everything. But I do believe love is the source of life. There’s more than one way to experience the Divine, as many ways as there are people, but there is one source, and our invitation to joy from Jesus: Abide in me and love one another that way.

You ARE Godstuff.



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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Ladinsky, Love Poems from God, New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2002, p.118

<sup>4</sup> Dalai Lama and Desmon Tutu, The Book of Joy, New York, NY: Avery, 2016.