

No Fooling!

"Joy's Got A Lot To Do With It!"

John 15:9-17, Psalm 98

Sixth Sunday in Easter

May 9, 2021

A rerun from May 6, 2018

It's Easter.

Something's happening!

Really? No fooling? No fooling!

Jesus walks the talk with us beyond the cross to new daily life. And, we are coming to know...

being Christian is a about relationships.

Realizing our best thinking cannot be done alone,
outside of meaning centered relationship.

And as we get more and more Eastered...it's about accepting how others may respond differently to you

as we enlarge our repertoire of responses
to daily life situations.

It means letting go of the illusion or delusion of control.

To do that, you *must* be willing to think differently...

To let God be God and recognize God is at work in each of us...not just you! The Bible tells us so!

...Many of you know...I grew up in a little town in the Catskill Mountains in New York.

It was a wonderful place and way to grow up...knowing and being known by many people.

Isn't this the longing most of us have? Being known, belonging, being cared about!

And today, so many of us in this modern, quick paced culture of ours...experience the loss of just that: being known, belonging.

Tippe is here as an antidote for pressures of modern life.

...Back then, there was a sense of safety and security that often seems missing these days.

Yet, I would imagine that in that little town there were "little town" things happening...

like gossiping and clicks and the rest.

But as a child, I was not aware of any of it.

In that town,
there was a sense of friendship that embraced a real feel of servanthood among people...

friends serving each other's needs and best interests

...because that's what it takes to live in a small town in the mountains!

Pulling together.

And, in many ways, I think that's what it takes in a small church in a city: pulling together.

Remember:

I come to church because I never know when you may need me and I know you come because you never know when I may need YOU!

Back then, that sense of trusting friendship wove itself into the majesty of the mountains and the glory of the ponds and fields (like our gardens and labyrinth and fountains).

The sensibilities of friendship wove their way into the routine of school and church as most of us came together...(like Tippe Café and Circles and worship(s) and Parlor Class).

It still permeates my memories. Brings me joy!

Joy...a daily dose of Easter, that new song
for the perpetual marvelousness of things!

And there in that town was my dad, who modeled for our family (and all those who knew him)

**a depth caring for others which was inseparable
from his joy—**

this is what was most amazing to me as a child.

In his caring and joy he found a real freedom of spirit.

A joyful freedom was reflected in the gate of his step,
the tune of his whistle, his dry humor and slap-stick shenanigans.

He was free inside to risk being a servant, a true friend.

And he in-joyed it!

I can remember so many times we would be walking down the street together
holding hands

and someone would need help opening a car door, or carrying a package, or seemed
lost...

and we would stop and dad would offer himself as help.

I can remember being most touched by the fact that
my dad wasn't afraid to help those he didn't know.

He wasn't afraid to do the smallest or the largest thing...
for anyone!

He knew joy and it was complete. It was enough for him
and his joy was contagious...

when you see joy in me, I caught it from dad and mom.
I miss him so much. And Viv, too!

He wasn't afraid.

He was free.

He didn't hesitate.

His love was complete. His joy!

**What is it that allows someone to be friend to someone (which moves you in and
out of servant and far beyond it through love)**

...someone they don't even know...

a real friend to someone they do?

Isn't it risky? Too risky?

Maybe those who are willing to risk
are those who have come to know deeply

Jesus is their friend and God their companion

and nothing can separate them from God...
there is no such thing as rejection with God.

And so for them, there is no risk
in loving friendship and kind servanthood.

Servanthood, friendship, joy, freedom- become one.

For them, the risk is in not reaching out to others...

Not living that oneness, not living in the ways of Jesus.

The word "friend" comes from a root meaning "to love" and a base meaning "free".

Friendship=free love...or maybe that's, **loving freely**.

Friendship is about loving someone else enough
that you are willing to serve them.

And able to let go of all the hang ups in doing so...

**whether it's a moment in the life of a stranger or
a life-time of moments with someone you know...**

Friends love because they cannot separate
their sense of self and well-being
from the other's well-being.

When the other is in pain, I am in pain.

I cannot be happy, if you are unhappy.

I cannot find peace, if you are troubled.

I cannot know joy, if you know no joy.

No justice for you, no rest for me.

You are my friend.

**And so I act.....even if it is risky and what benefits you does not benefit me directly
at all...**

because I cannot separate out my well-being from your well-being. We are one.

**Isn't this what is meant by
laying down your life
for another?**

Isn't this what God is all about?

**God cannot know happiness, peace, joy
until we know them...and God is willing to do whatever
it takes to help us move toward these realities...**

even walk amongst us, touch us and teach us,

befriend us,

**even die in order to live with integrity and
show us the way
to resist the world and find freedom.**

What a friend we have in Jesus...God with us...
who experiences the pain of life with us...
staying with us until his own joy completes...us!

True joy has to do with living life to its fullest which means it includes both laughter and tears.....through the painful times as well as good times.

Often, joy comes out of struggle, even comes in times of great loss...a deeper joy than just feeling good.

Even with all the pain, loneliness, frustration of Jesus' life, He knows joy.

Maybe Jesus knows joy exactly because of all the pain, loneliness, and frustration--light in the darkness!

In offering us *his* joy that *our* joy may be complete,
Jesus validates all the pain and loneliness and frustration *we know...*
and offers *us* a divine way to hold these feelings in tension...

in such a way that life opens to us and awe overtakes us.

And it has to do with the merging of servanthood and friendship...being friend to others as He is friend to us.

The secret of a joyful life.....risking friendship.

The key to risking friendship...seeking joy moment to moment, interaction to interaction.

**What's joy got to do with it?
Everything.**

So many have laid down their lives for you.
Some known to you. Some not.

Jesus invites us this morning to do the same...
for some known to us...

and I would imagine even more importantly...
some unknown to us personally,

who live in the small and large towns of God's community.

How will you lay down your life?
How will you know how?
When to?

Seek joy...and you will know.

Easter people are not alone. Together, we are courageous,
gracious, and peace-able.

Easter people make love, make peace as if all life depends upon it.
It does!

You can think differently expanding your repertoire of responses to life...

**for you do know yourself well enough
to begin to begin
and you are not alone!**

You have a friend in Jesus...

Sing: # 465, Verse 1

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit; O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!