

**HYMNS:** 767 322 197 643

**INTROIT:** Psalm 66:8-20

Bless our God, you peoples, and cause the sound of His praise to be heard!  
He is keeping our souls among the living, and has not allowed our feet to slide.  
For You have tested us, O God. You have refined us as silver is refined.  
You have brought us into the net. You have laid hardship on our backs.  
You have let men ride over our heads. We have gone through fire and through  
water. Nevertheless, You have brought us out to abundance.

I shall go into Your temple with burnt offerings. I shall fulfil to You my vows,  
which my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble.

I shall sacrifice fat animals to You with the sacrificial smoke of rams. I shall  
prepare bulls and goats.

Come and listen, all you who fear God, that I may declare what He has done  
for my soul!

I cried to Him with my mouth, and my tongue has given high praise.

If I had been aware of injustice in my heart, the Lord would not have listened,  
but God has certainly heard me. He has paid attention to the sound of my  
prayer.

Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, or turned His mercy away  
from me!

**COLLECT:** O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy  
inspiration grant we may think those things that are right and by Your  
merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our  
Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now  
and for ever. Amen.

*Welcome to all worshipping with us today!*

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

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***Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.***

**READINGS:**

Acts 17:16-31 He is never far from any one of us.

1 Peter 3:13-22 He is at the right hand of God.

John 14:15-21 I shall not leave you as orphans.

**Acts 17:16-31**

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was irritated in him when he saw that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, he had discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and with the God-fearing Greeks and in the marketplace every day with people who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also had conversations with him, but some were asking, “What might this scrap-collector want to say?” Others were saying, “He seems to be one who proclaims foreign divinities,” because he was telling the Good News about Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> They took an interest in him, brought him to the Areopagus and asked, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> For you are introducing some astonishingly strange things into our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean.”

<sup>21</sup> All the Athenians and the foreigners who were living there spent their time doing nothing but either saying or listening to something quite new.

<sup>22</sup> Paul stood in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. <sup>23</sup> For, as I walked around and carefully observed your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an unknown god.’ Therefore, I am telling you about what you are worshipping, although you do not know about it. <sup>24</sup> **God, who made** the world and everything in it, is the Lord of **heaven and earth**. He does not live in temples made by human hands, <sup>25</sup> and human hands do not serve Him as if He needed anything. He Himself **gives** everyone **life, breath** and everything else.

<sup>26</sup> From one man He has made every nation of mankind to live all over the earth. He has set the times allotted to them and the boundaries inside which they should live, <sup>27</sup> that they may search for God and perhaps feel their way to Him and find Him, although He is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup> For in Him we live, move and exist, as even some of your poets have said, ‘For, we also are His offspring.’ <sup>29</sup> Therefore, since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the Divine Being is like gold, silver or stone, like an image that the art and the imagination of a human being have formed. <sup>30</sup> Although in past times God overlooked such ignorance, He now commands people everywhere that they should all repent,

<sup>31</sup> because He has set a day when **He is going to judge the world justly**, by a Man whom He has appointed. He has provided everyone reason to believe this by raising Him from the dead.”

### 1 Peter 3:13-22

<sup>13</sup> Who is the one who will harm you if you are eager to do good? <sup>14</sup> However, even if you were to suffer because of what is right, you would be blessed. Do not be afraid of what they are afraid of and **do not let yourselves be intimidated!** <sup>15</sup> Rather, **in your hearts regard Christ the Lord** as holy! Always be ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that you have but do this with gentleness and respect! <sup>16</sup> Keep a good conscience, that those who make fun of your good life in Christ may be ashamed of their slander! <sup>17</sup> It is better to suffer, if it is God’s will, for doing right than for doing wrong.

<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the Righteous One for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the human nature but made alive by the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> through whom He also went and preached to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> who were disobedient long ago, when God waited patiently, in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared. In it only a few people, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup> That also prefigured baptism, which now saves you, not by washing dirt from the body but by guaranteeing a good conscience before God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> He has gone to heaven and is at the right hand of God, after angels, rulers and powers have been made subordinate to Him.

### John 14:15-21

<sup>15</sup> “If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments. <sup>16</sup> I shall also ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. <sup>17</sup> He is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see or know Him. You know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you.

<sup>18</sup> I shall not leave you as orphans. I am coming back to you.

<sup>19</sup> “Only a little while longer and the world will not see Me any longer, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in My Father, that you are in Me and that I am in you.

<sup>21</sup> “The person who has My Commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The person who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and show Myself to him.”

**A LIVING, LOVING FAMILY**  
**Sermon for the Sixth Sunday of Easter 2023**  
**John 14:15-21**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel read before, John 14:15-21: **“If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments. <sup>16</sup> I shall also ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. <sup>17</sup> He is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see or know Him. You know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I shall not leave you as orphans. I am coming back to you.**

**<sup>19</sup> “Only a little while longer and the world will not see Me any longer, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in My Father, that you are in Me and that I am in you.**

**<sup>21</sup> “The person who has My Commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The person who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and show Myself to him.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Christ has established His church to be a living, loving family, and we are a part of it. In our text for today, we shall see how wonderful this news is.

Our text from John 14 is part of Jesus’ discourse to His disciples on Maundy Thursday, the night in which He would be betrayed. After supper and before they went to the garden, Jesus talked with His disciples, and we get a portion of it here in our text.

Our text follows from last Sunday when we saw Jesus giving hope to the disciples by telling them He was going to the Father’s house to prepare a place for them. He would be leaving them very shortly. Soon He would be taken from them, and they won’t see Him. As Jesus prepared His disciples

for His departure, He gave them instructions on how to conduct themselves when He was gone. More than that, He gave them courage and comfort for when He would leave, and these instructions were a “*both-and*.” Jesus was *both* equipping them *and* instructing them. It’s not one or the other; it’s “*both-and*.” The courage and comfort He gave to them would enable them to live out His instructions. So it is for us. Our Lord has given us the courage and the comfort we need to be His living, loving family, *even though we do not see Him with our eyes*.

Here are His instructions: “**If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments.**” And again: “**The person who has My Commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.**” The way for us to show our love for Jesus is to keep His Commandments. It would be a contradiction for us to say we love Jesus but not to keep His Commandments. If you love Jesus, then you will keep His Commandments.

And what are His Commandments? In the immediate context of what Jesus is saying to His disciples, the primary commandment He’s referring to is His command for us to love one another because right before this, Jesus had said, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another*” (John 13:34). And notice, the love that Jesus commands is the love that He Himself demonstrated and embodied. It’s a “*just as I have loved you*” kind of love.

How had Jesus loved His disciples? Again, right in the immediate context of our text, we have seen His love in action. Jesus got down on His knees and washed His disciples’ feet. He, the Master, served His disciples in love and says this is the kind of love with which we are to love one another: “*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you*” (John 13:14). So this example of Christ’s love in action, in humble servanthood - this sheds light on what it means for us to love one another as He has loved us, and thus to love Jesus and keep His Commandments.

Are there people for you to love in your life? Are there people in our congregation in this little family of disciples right here for you to love with a Jesus-kind of love? Are there church members here - or maybe they don’t happen to be here this morning, but they’re still a part of our congregation -

are there brothers and sisters for you to forgive, help, or serve? If we have our eyes and ears open and spend time with one another as a family, we can discover those opportunities to love. Shall we give it a go?

But note, the key here is that ***Jesus has loved us first***. This is how we know what love is and how we are empowered and equipped to love, by first being on the receiving end of Christ's love for us. "*We love, because He first loved us,*" John says in his First Letter.<sup>1</sup> And in the Gospel, we find out how, and how much, Christ has loved us. John 13:1 says, "*Before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knew that His hour had come to leave this world and go to the Father. He had loved His own who were in the world and loved them completely.*" He loved them to the end! He loved them to the uttermost degree, and He loved them until His goal was reached!

Now the hour had come. This was the hour in which Jesus would bring the saving mission He was sent to its finish. Jesus would be going to the cross, handed over into death, to accomplish the life of the world. Jesus knows this is what is about to be set in motion: His betrayal and arrest, His suffering, and His crucifixion for our salvation. This is how much Jesus loves us. "*No one has greater love than this, to lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). Jesus is doing that, and that goal will be reached when Jesus cries out from the cross, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30).

So Jesus' love comes first. His is the essential love that precedes and produces everything else. All our loving comes from Him loving us first. That is how we need to hear His words to keep His Commandments by loving one another. It's not a cold command in a vacuum. It's not a command we must keep to win or earn our salvation. No. ***Our salvation has already been won. Jesus has earned it by suffering and dying for us.*** Christ, the only Son of God, has shed His holy precious blood for all sinners everywhere, and that is the price by which we are free and forgiven - no other way. So Jesus' command that we love one another comes not in a vacuum but rather in the warm embrace of God's own forgiving love for us in Christ.

Now, do we need help to carry out this Commandment? Absolutely! Our selfish, sinful nature battles against us and tries to keep us from loving others

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 4:19

with selfless love. We have this internal struggle between the old Adam and the new person we have in Christ. It is hard, but God will help us in our struggle. Listen to what Jesus says: **“If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments. <sup>16</sup> I shall also ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. <sup>17</sup> He is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see or know Him. You know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you.”**

Besides Jesus Himself, we have another Helper on our side, at our side. The Holy Spirit is called the **“Spirit of Truth.”** He, the Spirit, is the Helper, the Comforter, the Counsellor, the One walking by our side to help us live the Christian life. We are not alone on this journey. We are not alone in this struggle. The Spirit guides us in all truth. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. He was given in our baptism to keep us in the faith and to energise our Christian living. And the Spirit is working here, in the church, through the means of grace, to strengthen us in faith toward God and in fervent love toward one another.

So this is how we are a loving family: by first knowing and receiving Christ’s love and by the help of the Holy Spirit. And for those times when we fail and stumble in being the loving people we are meant to be, God’s love and forgiveness are right here to restore and renew us.

A loving family, that’s who we are in the church. And on top of that, we are a living family because we have been raised up with the very life of Christ! Listen to what Jesus says: **“I shall not leave you as orphans. I am coming back to you. <sup>19</sup> “Only a little while longer and the world will not see Me any longer, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live.”**

On the night Jesus said this, He had told His disciples that He was about to leave them. And, indeed, that very night, He would be betrayed, arrested, and handed over to death. They would mourn and weep and be afraid, but Jesus promises them: **“I shall not leave you as orphans. I am coming back to you.”** When would that happen? On Easter! On the third day, Jesus will be raised from the dead, and they will see Him again. The disciples will see their risen Lord physically present in their midst, who would be with them in that way for forty more days until He ascended into heaven. But they know that Jesus is risen, has won the victory over sin and death, and lives forever.

This is good news for us. Even though we do not see Jesus now with our eyes, we know and believe *He is indeed risen from the dead.* The Spirit has worked that faith in our hearts through the Word. And by that same Word, we know that all who believe and are baptised into Christ - will share in His resurrection!

Listen again to the promise of our Lord: “**Because I live, you also will live.**” This is a promise for every one of us! This promise is utterly reliable. Stake your life on it. Jesus lives, and you will live also. Your loved ones who have died in the Lord are alive, with Christ, and Jesus will raise them up bodily on the day He returns. Death is not the end of the story, by no means! Christ’s resurrection victory is ours! New life now and eternal life forever! This is the life Christ gives to us and to all who trust Him.

And so this living, loving family that we are a part of here is not the limit or the extent of Christ’s church. His family extends to all corners of the earth and history’s reaches. When Christ returns, we shall begin to see how great this family is, from every tribe, language, people, and nation. And even now, we praise God with Mary Magdalene, Peter and John, and with all the witnesses of the resurrection, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven.

Dear friends, because Jesus lives and loves, we also shall live and love. Let this promise of our living, loving Lord sink into your ears today and dwell in your heart: “**Because I live, you also will live.**” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER.

Lord, our God, You alone know the plans that You have for us and our world, but we rejoice and worship You because we know that they are loving plans. In Your goodness, You spread life, love, beauty, and joy throughout Your creation. In Your grace, You lighten the misery of our sinful lives, and bless us with pardon and peace. If it is Your will that we must pass through troubles, enable us to turn them into opportunities for Your glory.



We give You our warmest thanks for the precious gift of Your Son, Jesus, whom You have sent that we may have life in all its fullness. We praise You that He has humbly come into our world, has taken on Himself our sins, and has carried them to death on the cross. We glorify Your name for our release from the power of death, and for our sure hope of heaven through His resurrection.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of being Your spiritual priests, as we pray in Jesus' name. We thank You for Your promise to hear all our prayers. Keep us close to Jesus each day in faith and love, gladly hearing His Word and following Him, wherever He leads us. Send Your Word out into the whole world, that it may achieve what You have planned for it. Let us as Your representatives, whom You have called out of darkness, proclaim Your light in this dark world. Give us the courage also to speak Your word of judgment when people reject Christ, the Cornerstone.

Bless Your Church on every continent. Renew Your people to be a loving fellowship of believers, a family of trust and prayer, and people who are ready to serve the needy in love.

Lead all the nations of the earth along the ways of justice, righteousness, and peace. Look with special favour on our country. Give to our Prime Minister, to the Premiers of each State, to our cabinets and parliaments, to our police and to our courts, such qualities of heart and mind that they may carry out their duties earnestly, wisely, and fairly. Protect us from all enemies, both within and without our country. Remove all strife from us. Inspire obedience to all law and order. Fill all citizens with love of holiness and moral purity. Grant that all who work in industry may find joy in their work and receive proper rewards for their efforts. Give satisfaction to those who work in the professions, as they work for the good of all. Give those who farm the soil favourable weather. Bless their work of feeding the world.

Bless all our loved ones, and make our homes places of peace. We remember especially the sick, the troubled, and the bereaved. In Jesus' name free them from the burdens of their pain and sadness.

Keep us standing strong and steady in faith. Since serving You is never useless, give us the opportunity to be busy in Your work. In Jesus' saving name we offer You these prayers. Amen.

**Article:     How to Love**

How can I love God? How can I love God with all my heart, mind, soul, and being? How can I love God at all? How can I begin to love God? On my own, I cannot love God. Cracking the whip of “You shall love” condemns me as a non-lover and hater. It does not turn me into a lover of God.

The answer is the Gospel. God turns me into a lover by loving me and telling me that He loves me. The Bible says, “*We love because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). God the Father loved me so much that He gave His only-begotten Son to be my Saviour. God the Son loved me so much that He came to suffer and to die for me, for my sins, in my place.

God loves you just as much. But each of us needs to say “me” and “my” in personal faith. Jesus loves me. Jesus died for my sins. God has forgiven me, for Jesus’ sake.

We do not make ourselves lovers any more than we make ourselves believers. God the Holy Spirit does both through the Gospel, the message of God’s love and grace in Christ. After convicting us of our sin by the Law, the Holy Spirit convinces us of forgiveness by the Gospel. The Word of the Gospel is His tool to assure and reassure us that God is no longer mad at us for our sins but is pleased with us because His Son took the guilt of our sins upon Himself and bore the punishment for our sins in our place on the cross.

The Holy Spirit makes us believers. He turns us to trust that God really has loved us so much that He went to the cross for our salvation. The same message that moves us to believe and trust moves us also to love. Once one believes the Gospel and so knows something of God’s great love for him, the question is no longer: How can I love God? The question is: How can I not love God who loves me so much?

How can I love my neighbour? How can I love my enemy? How can I love all other people as I love myself? How can I want what is best for them? How can I begin to love others? On my own, I cannot love others.

The answer is the Gospel. God turns me into a lover by telling me of His love for me and for all people. If I am aware of God’s love for me in Christ - and of God’s love for you and for him and for her and for them in Christ - it becomes rather harder to hate, easier to love. If I look at another person - any other person - and say to myself: God loves him the same as He loves me, and Jesus loved him enough to die for him as well as for me; it is hard to stay angry, to bear a grudge, to go on hating.

Only believers in Christ have this motivation to love. But for them, it is a powerful motivation. For them to go on hating, they would positively have to resist the Gospel. They would fall from faith and grace.

But it is not simple. It is not easy. It is not a one-time cure. One who has been brought to faith still struggles with doubt. One who has been brought to love still struggles with hate. We Christians are flesh and spirit, old man and new man. The old Adam is a hater. Flesh hates. Spirit loves. The old sinful nature does not love. The new spiritual nature does not hate. We have that conflict throughout our Christian lives in this world. So our love, even as our faith, must be renewed, rebuilt, and rejuvenated by repeated contact

with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In heaven, there will be no more hate, no more struggle with hate. Then and there, we shall love God and the neighbour as we ought. That will be a big part of the joy of heaven.

### Children's Message:

A long time ago, I learned that there was air all around. Now, I certainly can't feel the air. Can you? I certainly can't smell the air. Can you? I certainly can't see the air. Can you? Well, if you can't feel it or smell it or see it, how do you know there is air all around?

Picture in your mind a balloon. Now, picture this balloon being blown up. What is making the balloon get bigger? Yes, it's air. Air is filling the balloon. The more air that is blown into the balloon, the bigger it gets. We can't actually see the air, but we can see what air can do.

There is something else around us and in us that we cannot see. That something else is called the Holy Spirit.

One day Jesus was talking to His disciples. He knew that He was going to die and rise again. After His resurrection, Jesus knew He would be going back to heaven. He also knew that His disciples would miss Him and would need help remembering and believing in Him. So Jesus gave His disciples a promise. He told them, "I shall also ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever" (John 14:16). Advocate is another name for the Holy Spirit, and Jesus promised to ask God the Father to send the Holy Spirit to them. The Holy Spirit would help the disciples believe in Jesus and show their faith to others.

Jesus has given the same promise to us. We received the Holy Spirit when we were baptised. We cannot feel, smell, or see the Holy Spirit, but there is a way that we can know the Holy Spirit is alive in us. How?

Well, we can look at the things we do and say to see what the Holy Spirit can do. The Holy Spirit helps us believe in Jesus. Jesus teaches us that people who believe in Him follow His commands to love one another. That means that every time we show the love of Jesus to each other, we are showing that the Holy Spirit is alive in us. The Holy Spirit helps us follow Jesus' example and love one another through the things we do and say.

How can you share Jesus' love with others? When we do these things, we are following the commands of Jesus. When we do these things, we are showing that Jesus is alive in us. Because He died and rose again, someday we shall all rejoice as we join Jesus and all believers in heaven. Until that day, the Holy Spirit is alive in us, helping us show everyone around that we are alive in Jesus!



*Dear Jesus, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help us show that the Holy Spirit is alive in us as we share Your love with others. In Your name we pray. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

<b>18 May (Thursday) Ascension Day</b>	<b>21 May 7 Easter</b>	<b>28 May Pentecost</b>
7.30pm GRN HC Readings: Acts 1:1-11 Ephesians 1:15-23 Luke 24:44-53 Hymns: 771, 169, 111, 372, 291, 113	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
<b>Sunday, 21 May</b>		
READINGS: Acts 1:12-26; 1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11 John 17:1-11		
HYMNS: 498 783 80 (175 85) 416		
<b>Sunday, 28 May</b>		
READINGS: Numbers 11:24-30; Acts 2:1-21; John 7:37-39		
HYMNS: 123 121 306 (763 398) 134		

**BIBLE STUDIES:**

Friday, 12 May, Greenwood, 7.30pm.

Thursday, 25 May, Lowood, 10.00am.

Friday, 26 May, Oak/Aub at Aubigny, 7.30pm.

Sunday, 28 May, Toowoomba, 8.00am.