

Living Lent | February 24

Abiding in Love

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

John 15: 1, 6-16 (NIV)

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

This forty (40) days in the wilderness is a time when we reflect on our own tendencies to create distance between ourselves and God AND look towards new possibilities in Jesus Christ.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus invites His disciples to abide in love as they are no longer servants, but friends. Their relationship is forever changed and so is ours. Jesus has called us friends, and like any relationship, it must be tended to. Lucky for us, Jesus tells us how we tend to our relationship with God: by abiding in love.

But what does it mean for us to abide in God's love? For me, I think it means recognizing that vines grow more than one grape at a time. Grapes grow in clusters, and multiple clusters grow on a vine. Abiding in God's love means being a steward to God's community that we are all a part of. It means being vulnerable and loving those who Jesus calls friends. It means that we do not walk through life alone and neither do any of those other friends. Abiding in love means we are in this together.

I am reminded of a story about a couple who had just experienced a traumatic life event together. The weight of their grief was complicated and debilitating. Yet their community showed up with food when they were too tired to cook, with tears when they were ready to not cry alone anymore, and hope that even in this pain, God was with them still. Friends who they didn't even feel that close to anymore quietly took care of laundry and dropped off take out. When I think about abiding in love, this story is what I think of. I think of that couple being vulnerable to share what they were experiencing with their people, and I think of their people showing up in all the discomfort of grief. Abiding in love is abiding in community.

This Lenten season, what does abiding in love mean to you? Can you share your own tendencies to create distance from God with your people? What new possibilities is Jesus Christ revealing to you?

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

Rev. Annie Franklin Arvin is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Mission at St. Simons Presbyterian Church. She is honored to walk through the ups and downs of life with the youth of SSPC and the greater community in Glynn County reminding us all that God's love is abundant! Annie has led the parishioners of SSPC in the Day of Service the last two Living Lent Seasons as they work on the campus of Morningstar bringing joy and helping beautify the campus that the Children call Home.

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Brunswick, GA 31525

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Perry, GA 31069

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