

## Fruits of the Spirit – Love & Joy

Love what you do what you love. My younger sister gave me this sign just before I came to Faith. It's been in my office and I've read it a lot. Suddenly it sprang to my head as I was praying and preparing on our scripture passage for this series. Coming back from vacation is always interesting. You never quite know what will be waiting for you when you return. What a blessing it was for me to have these last 2 weeks of vacation. I shared with the choir on Wednesday that we camped at the Rio Chamas River in New Mexico for a couple of days and then visited Grand Sand Dunes National Park in Southern Colorado up to Northern Colorado to see family for a couple of days before heading to the Black Hills of South Dakota. We camped for a week enjoying the beauty of creation. Members of the choir asked what I meant by camping. I said tent, sleeping bags, camp stove. It was glorious and I'm already planning more short getaways that allow me to unplug and connect in deeper ways with God and those around me. Don't get me wrong I love creature comforts, air conditioning, bug free environments, cooking not dependent on weather but I love the simplicity of making due with what we have and slowing down, way down. The only thing that moves quickly is getting my first cup of coffee going. Everything else, it's on it's own time.

Do what you love and love what you do. Our passage for the next 4 weeks talks about the Fruits of the Spirit. The 9 traits that Paul lifts up as the evidence of faith. Paul is writing to the people of Galatia

because they were struggling. There was quite the controversy about freedom. Some said that Jesus freed them from the law and that they are free to act as they wish. Paul agrees and disagrees. Yes we are free but when we freely choose to follow Christ we are called to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Somehow we have lost a sense of what love looks like.

Stepping away and soaking up creation I was reminded by God that our lives should be filled with love – the affection of people but also filled with doing things that bring us joy. For me, joy comes from being outdoors, preferable in the mountains eating wonderful food that I prepare but don't have to clean up. Joy comes from seeing animals in their natural environment (not snakes), from singing songs in the car with the family, playing games in the tent as it rains. Joy comes from not having an agenda of things that have to be done beyond meeting our basic necessities. And my joy is not the same as others. In fact some members of the choir do not share the same sense of joy. What a beautiful thing it is to do what we love and love what we do. We do not need to do the same things but supporting each other to find the joy in our lives is part of living our faith.

All too often, we think that to be faithful we have a list of things we should never do. Paul even lists those actions that are the antithesis of love and joy. They are selfish and self-serving. But when we support each other to find those things in our lives that bring joy it rubs off making our community brighter. When we have joyful things

to do in our lives it makes it easier to do things that are necessary but may not be our favorite. Imagine if we encouraged each other, not to keep our nose to the grindstone and survive but to find rest and live into those things that bring us joy. I know that I am a much better person, pastor, mother, wife, daughter when I have the opportunity to do things that I enjoy. And as I love to do some things and you love to do different things. Living this way is gifts based ministry. There are some who love to clean and organize and there are others who only do it because it has to be done. There are some who love to talk to strangers and then others who only do it when there is no other choice. There are some who love to sing and others who love to listen. When we come together doing what we love and loving what we do it's infectious.

What happens when we free ourselves from the expectations of what we should do and live into the freedom of Christ that comes to us through grace. Grace to live lives full of love and joy. What happens when we reject the world's idea of success and measure ourselves against the success of Christ loving God, neighbor and ourselves. Lives that are life giving flow from love and joy. Our challenge this week is to find ways to do what we love and love what we do that demonstrates our faith by loving God and neighbor. In the name of the Father the son and the Holy Spirit amen.