**1 Samuel 20:12-17** April 24, 2016

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Easter 5 (Examination)

*This sermon is shorter because it is Examination Sunday, when the confirmation class is examined in the worship service.*

**Blood Brothers**

Dear Friends in Christ,

 “Love one another” said Jesus in our Gospel reading. What does that mean? Let me tell you a story. But this isn’t a story. This is God’s truth.

 You know something of David and Goliath. David, the little youthful shepherd, probably about high school graduate age, killed a giant warrior in armed combat. At this point David was just a humble shepherd. At this point Saul was king of Israel. Saul’s oldest son, Jonathan, was heir to the throne. Apparently Jonathan was of about the same age as David and he took a shining to this young, bold hero. As a promise of friendship Prince Jonathan gave shepherd-boy David his royal robe, his belt, his sword and his bow. David had nothing to return. It was not a friendship of equals. Yet they were best friends.

 What could make a prince and a shepherd youth friends? Before his triumph over Goliath, David shouted across the battlefield, *“You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel!”* (1 Samuel 17:45). At another time, Jonathan rushing into his most desperate battle said, *“The Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few”* (1 Samuel 14:6).

 Both young, bold men entrusted everything to the Lord.

 But there was a problem. The Lord decreed that David would be king, and Jonathan would be passed over. When he saw the kingship taken from his family King Saul, Jonathan’s father, tried to kill David repeatedly.

 Jonathan would lose his rightful kingship. David would be the one to take it. Would their friendship survive? Probably not. Would your friendships survive such a shock?

 As King Saul’s spears started flying at David, David seemed to—though he never says as much—but he seemed to start wondering if he really can trust Jonathan. You know those movies go with the secret agents and the double agents and the triple agents. “Whom can I really trust?”

 In the middle of that doubt in David, in the middle of Jonathan coming to grips with the fact that the throne which should be his is going to go to David, this is what we hear: [read the text].

*1Samuel 20:12 Then Jonathan said to David: “By the Lord, the God of Israel, I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? 13But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. 14But show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, 15 and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David’s enemies from the face of the earth.”*

 *16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May the Lord call David’s enemies to account.” 17And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.*

 In our Gospel reading, Jesus said, “Love one another.” What is love? This Bible story tells us. It is not what the world says love is. The world’s definition of love is: “I find something in you that pleases me.” And that isn’t necessarily a bad thing. But it is far from the complete definition of love Christ meant when he said, “Love one another.” God’s definition, Christ’s definition is, “I am making an unconditional commitment to you.” Jonathan and David’s friendship was that.

 It is generally true that you cannot love unless you have been loved. This is a sad truth because so many people have not been loved. They have been brutalized, victimized, violated, berated and bullied. And that treatment shows in how they treat others. Here, the Christian has the advantage. We have been loved. Jesus showed true love which was not just a feeling as long as we made him happy. His love is a life-sacrificing commitment to us. His commitment survives through the times we like traitors deny his name, the times we selfishly disregard his desires, the times that we tell him we just don’t have time for him because of our other loves in life. Through it all, he is faithful and forgiving. Because we have been greatly loved, we can love greatly.

 This is *part* of why when you young Christians, if it is God’s will that you marry, that you really need to marry a Christian. You will not share true Christian love if you do not share Christ in your relationship. You will be disappointed. You can have the world’s definition of love, but by definition your love based on the self-sacrificing love of Jesus will not be returned to you in kind.

 In another place the Bible says, *“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn”* (Romans 12:15). So which is easier? To be happy with happy people, or to be sad with sad people? I have an opinion. And I think our reading is the exception that proves the rule.

 When you stand to lose everything, and your friend stands to gain everything *at your expense*, can you rejoice with them? How much less so if you don’t like the person! Will you rejoice when someone less qualified gets a better job than you? Will you rejoice when their children succeed and yours do not? Examples abound. How easy is it to rejoice with those who rejoice? “Lord Jesus, help us to really love one another, with the self-sacrificing love you showed.”

 David’s and Jonathan’s commitment to each other is an example of this. In Jonathan’s promises to David, in every single verse, he used the Lord’s name. That was the basis for their commitment.

 When Jesus’ love for you is not just a fact learned in catechism class, but also a truth you have felt in your heart, you can love beyond what any person has shown you in your life. You know one who has loved you above all others. Amen.