

This sermon was not sent out last week Sunday. Here it is now for your spiritual growth and encouragement.

5th Sunday in Easter- Year C
May 2, 2010
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
1Samuel 20:12-17
Pastor Paul Horn

“Look at how much he loves me... more than his own life!”

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? ¹³ But 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. ¹⁴ But 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.” ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

The headlines in the papers that next day read: Shepherd Boy Slays Giant. That was a great day in the history of our nation. The enemy we feared so much ran, like dogs with tails between their legs, their champion had been felled, we cut them down. In those days it was common for victorious soldiers to march through the many towns and villages on the way home, and the women of town would rush out of their homes dancing and singing, playing tambourines and lutes, “Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands.” (1Sam 18:6-7) King Saul was very happy when he heard that I had defeated Goliath and that the Philistines had been beaten, but he was very angry when he heard that refrain sung over and over again. (18:8) I guess he was jealous.

The king promoted me, a “rags to riches” story; the lowly shepherd boy rises to military champion and quickly ascends the ranks in the army. Whatever campaign the king commanded me, me and my men were successful over all of Israel’s enemies. The LORD’s hand was with me, without him, we could not have been that successful. This made the king afraid of me and even more jealous.

Then there arose another incident that didn’t help our relationship. One of the daughters of the king fell in love with me. Her name was Michal. This irritated the king even more. But, being the conniving man that he was, he tried to use my fiancée to be a snare. He said that I could marry his daughter if I killed 100 Philistines. He was hoping the Philistines would kill me. I came back with 200 dead Philistines. He really became paranoid.

Soon after this the king told his attendants and even his son Jonathan to use whatever means possible to have me killed. Saul himself tried to kill me. I was known as a musician, so the king also employed me as his harp player. An evil spirit would come and trouble the king's soul, and the music would soothe him. But one day something clicked and he picked up his spear tried to pin me to the wall with it. But I dodged it and ran away.

It was lonely for me. I thought I was doing everything right, but it wasn't... for the king. But I had a friend. One of the sons of the king, Jonathan. He had approached me shortly after the battle with Goliath and we instantly hit it off. He even made a promise with me (18:3), a pledge of mutual loyalty and friendship. Jonathan loved me as he loved himself.

After the harp and spear incident I had to meet with Jonathan secretly, and I asked him, "What have I done wrong? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father that he is trying to take my life?" (20:1) Jonathan didn't want to believe it. He just thought it was an isolated incident. Father's having his hissy fit and he'll get over it. We wanted to test his theory. That week the king was holding a festival banquet. There was no way I would attend. But he'd notice my empty chair. So we agreed, when he asked, Jonathan would excuse me and say that I'm in Bethlehem holding our annual family sacrifice and see how he reacts. Well, you can probably guess how Saul reacted. He became so enraged that threw his spear at his own son and called him bad names.

See how much he loved me! More than his own life! Jonathan knew the destiny that would befall his family. He knew that the LORD had rejected his father as king since he disobeyed the LORD. My friend knew that the prophet Samuel had anointed me to succeed his father as king over all of Israel. It would be a messy transition. There would be bloodshed. There would be war between the house of Saul and the house of David. And so he made me promise that if he was still alive after all the dust settled, that I show mercy to his family. And if somehow, God forbid, that he died, he made me promise that I would show mercy on his family, just as the LORD had shown mercy to us. But Jonathan put his faith in God and his trust in me. See how much he loved me!

The king's hatred against me grew so intense, that took his own army to eradicate me once and for all. But my friend Jonathan again risked his life for consorting with the enemy. He went and found me and helped me find strength in God. (23:16)

Do you have friends like Jonathan? Do you love them the way he and I loved each other, no matter what the circumstances in life? Do you love the neighbors on your street, the employees or employers at your place of work, the customer at the grocery store, the commander in your unit, the same way? But more importantly, do you love your fellow believers this way? Do you look at each other and consider one another to be brothers and sisters in Christ, baptized children of God, washed in the blood of the Lamb, a soul for whom Jesus died? I know that there will be differences of opinion, personalities that are different than yours, people who do things differently than you do them. There will be misunderstandings. There will be times someone will say something, and it will be taken the

wrong way. Do you still love those brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you forgive them? Are you patient with them? Do you try to work things out or do you sit there and sulk and harbor a grudge? Do you show the willingness to resolve the situation with the individual or do you complain to others about it and gossip about the situation?

You can try to blame your loveless unforgiving attitude on your personality and say, "That's just how I am." You can try to blame the other person and say, "It's their fault. They're the one who needs to apologize." Doesn't matter, does it? God commands us that our love is to be patient, love is kind, it is not self-seeking, it does not harbor grudges. And so often it is not. Ultimately, your loveless unforgiving attitude is your own fault. You are the one who is listening to your sinful nature. You're the one who is listening to Satan whispering in your ear. It's easier to be angry instead of reaching out in love. You'd rather not tame the tongue that lashes out, you'd rather not pour water on the fire of anger, but stoke it so that the flames grow higher. You'd rather not soften your stubborn pride but harden it. And where does it get you? Look at what the king's anger toward me led him to do; he strayed from the LORD and in the end, instead of entrusting his life to God's care, he took his own life. And you remember Cain, who harbored anger toward his brother Abel, the LORD warned him, "Cain, sin is crouching at your door and you must master it." We end up sinning against our friends, more importantly, sinning against God. We end up losing friendships and hurting our relationship with our God. Your relationship with him is the most important one you can have on this earth.

Although we do not love as God demands of us, He never stops loving us. See how much he loved you, by loving his friends. Even though every single one deserted him, even though Peter denied knowing him, even though the women did not believe his words that he would rise again and walked somberly to his grave, he loved them. He was patient with them. He loved his friends in a way that you or I could never do with our friends, not even the love Jonathan and I had for each other; he loved them perfectly, flawlessly, unconditionally. But he did not just show this love to his friends, but with the lowest of society, the sinners and prostitutes and tax collectors. He lived this love toward his enemies, even pleading to this Father to forgive those who were pounding rough spikes through his hands and feet. Never a word of gossip or complaint fell from his lips. So perfect and complete was his love for his friends, for all people, that the Father credits his perfect life of love to you, to cover over your life and my life of less-than-perfect love.

See how much he loved you! Not only by living for his friends, for you, for all people, but loving you so much that he loved you more than his own life. I've heard of men like Navy SEAL Petty Officer Michael Monsoor and Marine Cpl. Jason Dunham who both sacrificed their lives for their comrades in arms. As a warrior king, I understand sacrifice in battle. But what those men did, what my friend Jonathan did for me, what you have done for friends, does not and cannot do what the Friend of sinners did for us. He gives up his life so that the sinner will not perish for their sins, but through belief in him, they will spend eternity with their friend and Savior Jesus. He sacrifices his life to restore the relationship that we ruined by our sins. Jesus reconciles us to the Father, changing our status from enemy to friend, from sinner to saint by his sacrifice on

the cross. That's the greatest gift a friend can give, to lay down his life for their friends. What a friend we have in Jesus! See how much he loved us! Even at the expense of his own life.

My son Solomon once wrote, "A friend loves at all times." (Proverbs 17:17) Isn't that the attitude that you will have? You can't help but act that way toward your friends, not just your friends, your neighbors, coworkers, and especially your brothers and sisters in Christ? You can't help but act that way when you have pondered the great love of your best and dearest Friend, Christ Jesus. That's why Jonathan and I loved each other so much. We were just responding to the great mercy and kindness the LORD had shown to us. I know you will, too. When friends fight, when offense is given, when feelings are hurt, then forgiveness will be offered, comfort will be made with the Gospel, you will help each other find strength in God's Word and you will recognize who each other is; someone who is loved by Christ Jesus.