


# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



May 5, 2024

## LOVE

*we have to learn it*

by Drew Downs

In this week's gospel, Jesus commands his followers to love one another. Which is totally on brand for Jesus—and we love to hear it.

What we don't love as much is thinking about what that really means. Or why it is that Jesus needs to remind us to love. We get that we need reminding, of course. But perhaps we are less inclined to realize that this makes it our true priority.

When we get irritated in check out lines, with bad service, or when we see stuff on the news that drives us batty, what do we do? We might remind ourselves to love and calm down a bit. That's fair. Good. But it also reveals that learning love as *first* response takes a lot of work. And that we shouldn't give ourselves a pass when it isn't. Love isn't just an emotion we experience, but a behavior we are commanded to learn. To practice. And ultimately, share everywhere.

# EASTER

2024

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### What is Worship?

I've been working on a pair of workshops for us this month on the nature and practice of worship. I think this will be both fun and informative so I hope, if you are able to join us, that you will!

As a taste of what we'll start with, let's look at how the Book of Common Prayer defines worship. You can find it in An Outline of the Faith, page 857:

Q. What is corporate worship?

A. In corporate worship, we unite ourselves with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God's Word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments.

This sounds kind of nuts-and-boltsy, doesn't it? It doesn't seem to tell us *why*. But it describes worship *after* prayer. After we've learned about the *way* we pray and how there are seven different *kinds* of prayer. In essence, our worship begins in response to God, in desire to learn, share, and participate in that holiness with others.

As Christians, we gather for worship. As Episcopalians, we gather in particular ways for worship. In the next few weeks, we'll explore what it is that we do—and how we participate in something amazing together. And how to improve our prayer life when we're not.

Join us for both workshops: **May 5th and 19th, at 11:30 am.**

With love,  
Drew

# EASTER

2024

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Sixth Sunday of Easter*

May 5, 2024

### **Collect**

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

John 15:9-17

Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

# EASTER

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## Reflection

A love command. This may feel paradoxical to some ears—and all too natural to others. It is, however, a challenge for all of us to follow.

This isn't Jesus's final word to his followers, but it is among them. And it comes in the midst of confusion and the beginnings of fear. After speaking to their connectedness in the vine, Jesus speaks to how the whole thing works—how life itself in God's dream—through love. Loving God and one another.

And Jesus offers this to them with an interesting paradox. He says that they are no longer servants of his, but friends. Servant is an odd word to us, since they are his students and he their teacher. But serving the rabbi *is* part of discipleship. And it is an appropriate word for our own relationship with him.

He says they are now friends—and yet he must give them one more command to serve. This moment might feel odd for one trying to claim friendship (read: equality) with his disciples. But it is foundational to the whole project. So we, too, should heed these words.

Friendship with Jesus demands love as the fundamental currency of *any* relationship. To follow Jesus means *being friends* in love with him *and with each other*.

And for us to embrace this command, to adopt this arrangement for our lives, we need to recall that Jesus is the vine connecting us (the branches) in a dream of love and eternal life. Which places this concept: loving people: into the highest place in our social hierarchy. Above self-protection, wealth, control, satisfaction, safety, everything.

The Jesus project isn't just "when in doubt, love people." It is the operating norm for all things.

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