

Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.todaysparent.com/pregnancy/baby-names/beautiful-flower-names-for-your-baby/>

It's Mother's Day. How does a mother (or other parent/guardian) show love? <Let them respond>

How does a baby show love? <Let them respond>

How does a preschooler show love? <Let them respond>

How does a child in elementary school show love?
<Let them respond>

How does a teenager show love? <Let them respond>

How does a young adult, graduated from school, show love? <Let them respond>

We already talked about how a parent shows love. How does a grandparent show love? <Let them respond>

Which is the best kind of demonstration of love?
<Let them respond>

While I may find some demonstrations of love more useful than others, what is most important is that they are demonstrations of **love**.

So if the demonstrations of love represent levels of maturity, what do your demonstrations of love to people you encounter say about your faith maturity?
<Let them respond>

May you grow in faith such that the love of Christ is unmistakably evident wherever you go.

Gospel lesson

This week's Gospel lesson continues where we left off last week, with Jesus teaching the disciples after the Last Supper, before going to the garden.



picture from <https://digitalmissioners.com/2020/05/john-159-17/>

John 15:9-17 (NRSV)

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” UMH #384>

Message: No Greater Love



picture adapted from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/living-the-resurrection/sixth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/sixth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Almighty source of all life and love, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please
- speak Your words through my mouth,

- open our ears to Your message, and
 - abide in our hearts,
 that we may **recognize** You more clearly, love You more
 dearly, and thus follow You more nearly. Amen.



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

Living the Resurrection

- ♥ April 4 – Terror & Amazement
- ♥ April 11 – Unless I See
- ♥ April 18 – Touch and See
- ♥ April 25 – Listen to My Voice
- ♥ May 2 – Abide in Me
- ♥ **May 9 – No Greater Love**
- ♥ May 16 – We Are Yours

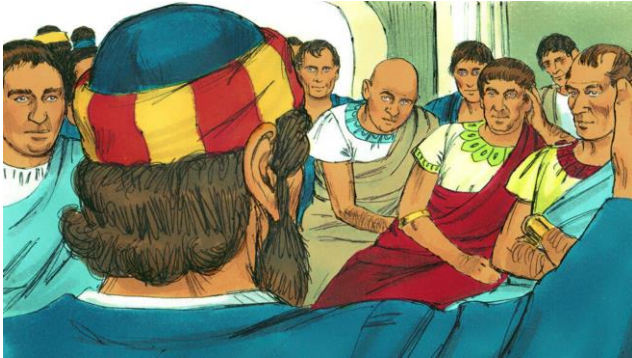
Our “Living the Resurrection” series now brings us to, “No Greater Love.” The summary references Mother’s Day:

“It is not our intention to dampen the spirit of the day, but to remind worship teams of the delicate nature of recognition. By all means, find ways to give thanks and to give honor. That is one of the tasks of the followers of Jesus (Romans 12:10). At the same time, however, offer prayers of healing for those who are struggling on this day.”

The concern about recognizing people’s different experiences with mothers reminds me that people have encountered vastly different experiences of faith through the global Church.

The psalmist tells us to “make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth...let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord” – and we who know the love

of God in our lives respond to that. But what of those who have not been shown the love of God yet?



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/peter-cornelius/>

In the reading from Acts, Peter was in the house of a Gentile. In those days, it was unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. The very people who were supposed to let the world know God existed and should be worshipped, avoided developing the kind of relationships needed to proclaim that to the world.

But Peter had had a vision from God, sending him to this Gentile's home. Now this was not just any Gentile; Cornelius was described as "a devout man who feared God with all his household; he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God." An angel of the Lord had appeared to him and told him to send for Simon Peter.

So when Peter entered the home of this Gentile stranger to proclaim the Good News, the household already had hearts open and ready to hear it. As their faith in Jesus blossomed, the Holy Spirit came upon them – and the Jewish apostles were astounded.

Without requiring they be circumcised or perform any sacrifices at the temple, Peter baptized these Gentiles into the family of Jesus. The Holy Spirit present upon them was God's sign that regardless of their physical condition or heritage, they were made holy and beloved because of their faith.

Too often, people are treated poorly because they are different from us. When someone claiming to be Christian treats an individual badly, what does that do to the individual's desire to seek Christ?



My life is my message.
- M.K. Gandhi

picture from https://www.mkgandhi.org/africaneedsgandhi/gandhis_message_to_christians.htm

Gandhi, the peaceful revolutionary of India, had read the Bible, really liked the sermon on the mount, and was interested in Christianity. However, upon heading up the steps to a church in apartheid South Africa, he was cut off from entering by a church elder who asked, "Where do you think you are going, kaffir? There is no room for kaffirs in this church. Get out of here or I'll have my assistants throw you down the steps!"

A missionary later asked him, "Mr. Gandhi, though you quote the words of Christ often, why is it that you

appear to so adamantly reject becoming his follower?" Gandhi's reply was clear: "Oh, I don't reject your Christ. I love your Christ. It is just that so many of you Christians are so unlike your Christ."

What a tragedy that so great a leader disengaged from the Church because of the way Christians behaved! Can you imagine how much further the love of Jesus might have been shared if Gandhi had espoused Christianity? But a so-called "Christian" failed to show the love of Christ. What kind of follower does not do as the leader directs?

Jesus said, "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."



<https://www.agnusday.org/comics/672/john-15-09-17-2012>

We are called to give of ourselves to others in a deep, and meaningful way, not just superficially. But let me be clear: we are NOT called to sacrifice everything for strangers – especially at the expense

of supporting our families – just because we think the strangers **might** be in need. First we need to get to know them, to understand their situation, and then we can consider how we may help most effectively.



picture from <https://www.holytextures.com/2009/04/john-15-9-17-year-b-easter-6.html>

Jesus told His friends to love one another, to love as He had loved. Notice that He did not say love was to lay one's life down for strangers, but for friends. It was never about sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice. It was not even about His gaining glory.

It was – and is – about forming healthy, nurturing relationships, enabling us to grow and live in the love of God. We are called to do likewise with one another: to form healthy, nurturing relationships to the point where we truly are willing to do anything needed to help [those we are in relationship with] to grow and develop in a healthy direction: for **their** sakes and for the strengthening of the bond between us, not because we think it is noble to do so.

Most people find taking care of a child to be more fun than taking care of an elderly relative. Why? Possibly because we can see that we are developing

potential with a child, while with the elderly there may be a sense of “already peaked and going downhill”. But that is a false sense!

Jesus showed us that there is greater life beyond this world. We have not peaked yet – we are still building toward our potential. And so is everyone else whom we encounter! We can help each other grow to something greater. The communities we build through relationships are still in process, too.

There is no end date on building up others in love, in reaching out with God’s love for them. If every interaction we have with others is focused on building a loving relationship, we will never drive others away from Christ with slurs like Gandhi was.

What we believe about Christ shapes our understanding of love. As was written in the 1st epistle of John, “The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brethren also. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child.”

We are called to love one another, as we are loved by God, demonstrated by Jesus, through the Holy Spirit.

Now let us respond with

The World Methodist Social Affirmation UMH #886

We believe in God, creator of the world and all people;
and in Jesus Christ, incarnate among us,
who died and rose again;
and in the Holy Spirit,
present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort

We believe; God, help our unbelief.

We rejoice in every sign of God's kingdom:
in the upholding of human dignity and community;
in every expression of love, justice, and reconciliation;
in each act of self-giving on behalf of others;
in the abundance of God's gifts
entrusted to us that all may have enough;
in all responsible use of the earth's resources.

Glory be to God on high; and on earth, peace.

We confess our sin, individual and collective,
by silence or action:
through the violation of human dignity
based on race, class, age, sex, nation, or faith;
through the exploitation of people
because of greed and indifference;
through the misuse of power
in personal, communal, national, and international life;
through the search for security
by those military and economic forces
that threaten human existence;

through the abuse of technology
which endangers the earth and all life upon it.

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

We commit ourselves individually and as a community
to the way of Christ:

to take up the cross;
to seek abundant life for all humanity;
to struggle for peace with justice and freedom;
to risk ourselves in faith, hope and love,
praying that God's kingdom may come.

Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

<Doxology UMH #95>

<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

God of unimaginable love, we have known of your caring since we were babies in our mother's arms. We have been told the stories of your love, and we have sung songs about your love. These things bring us comfort. What challenges us is the command of Jesus, "As I have loved you, so you should love one another" – not just those who think as we do, pray as we do, and look the way that we do.

Help us, through our giving, our living and our loving, to live up to the challenge of loving as you would have us love.

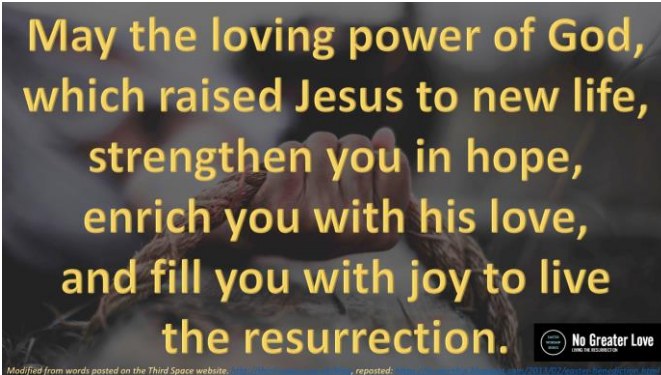
Give us wisdom and strength of resolve as we go about our daily lives. And help us, Lord, with:

- Healing touch and comfort for all who are ailing.
 - Coronavirus victims & society as a whole
 - Gary Sweet - radiation therapy & home issues
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- Thanks for
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- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Travelers
 - Family far off
- Social unrest - dismantle racism and reform systems
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Help us to be fearless in talking about our faith as a normal part of daily living.
 - For the sake of this our local church, one part of Your great church, guide each one of us this week to invite someone to come know You better.
 - Help us to encourage one another toward faith in You and toward living together in true Christian community.

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,
<Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "Christ Is Alive" UMH #318>

<Benediction>¹



background from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/living-the-resurrection/sixth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/sixth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

May the loving power of God,
which raised Jesus to new life,
strengthen you in hope,
enrich you with his love,
and fill you with joy
to live the resurrection.

Go and share that life and love with all whom you
meet, as you are guided by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Modified from words posted on the Third Space website. <http://third-space.org.uk/blog>, reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/02/easter-benediction.html>.