

02 May 2021

Sermons: Abiding

Jesus said, "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Over the course of my life, many people have left an impression upon me. My parents taught me to recognize words by reading to me every night before bed. My Mathematics teacher in High School taught me how to solve quadratic equations. A man I worked with at GM as a summer student taught me how to install a Cruise Control in a 1984 Malibu. The impact these individuals had on me was deeper than I first realized. From my parents I developed a love of books. My teacher enabled me to develop my abstract thinking skills. My co-worker taught me with enough practice you can learn to do anything. Each of these people took a little piece of themselves and planted it inside me. The final result was I became the person I am today.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples if they live in him and he in them, they will do great things. By doing so, he reveals their success depends upon how deeply they allow him to touch them.

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus said things which deeply affected his disciples. When he stated, "destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up" (**John 2:19**) after he cleansed the Jerusalem Temple, his disciples later remembered these words and understood they pointed towards his Resurrection. When he declared, "look around you and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting" (**John 4:35**) after he talked to the Samaritan woman, they realized his ministry broke religious, social and gender boundaries. When he said, "neither this man nor his parents sinned" (**John 9:3**) after he encountered the man born blind, they learned such conditions were not a sign of divine punishment. In each of these cases, Jesus revealed something about himself and his mission which his disciples recalled and shaped how they saw the world and carried out their calling. The fruit of Christ's abiding in them (living in their presence) was the spread of the Gospel message throughout the world. The fruit of their abiding in Christ (living in his presence) was the wisdom, courage and perseverance which enabled them to make this occur. Clearly, Christ had touched them deeply.

During this Covid 19 pandemic, the conditions we face are having an impact upon us. Many people are afraid, tired and confused. Yet, we are also having an impact upon the virus and each other. Our efforts to stop the spread of Covid 19, care for those who contract it and work to vaccinate people so they do not acquire it are limiting the damage it is causing in Canada and around the world. We are also having an impact on those around us. The question is what part of ourselves do we want abiding in others. Is it the part where we look out for ourselves and let others (especially those less well off) fend for themselves? Is it the part where we focus on what has been taken away from us instead of what we can contribute to the common good? Is it the part where we look to blame others instead of taking personal responsibility for the challenges we face? As Catholics and other people of faith we must ask ourselves, do these attitudes show God abiding in us? Perhaps, the part of ourselves we might want to abide in others includes our recognition of the responsibility to care for others (especially the weak). It might incorporate our ability to be grateful for the work of those saving and protecting lives. It might involve our desire to contribute something (anything) to make things better. It is up to each of us to determine how we will be remembered for the impact we made on this Covid 19 crisis.

Christ told his disciples they would enjoy great success if they abided in him and he abided in them. He makes us the same offer. The spread of his Gospel message has made a great impression upon our world. Let us hope the impression we make during this pandemic is equally positive.

May 2, 2021