



**Daily Manna for Thursday**  
**May 6, 2021**  
Prepared for you by  
**Intern Pastor Jack Busche**

**John 15:9-17**

[Jesus said:] <sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

There are a few passages in Scripture that I consider ‘heart’ passages; that is, they are the defining passages of the Bible that have stuck with me and are, for me, the heart of how I see my faith. One of these passages is Isaiah 58, which tells us about God’s deep desire for the powerless to be protected, whether they are a child, or an immigrant, or the poor. The other is this passage, which has lodged itself in my mind and my heart with the intensity of its promises and its commands.

I love this passage so much that I used to use it with middle school campers at Waypost Camp. When I was a counselor with a cabin of my own, I would read this passage (or a shorter piece of it) on our last night, after our final reflection service and before individual affirmations. I connected their experience as a cabin, in which they may have started as strangers and ended as friends, with the experience of the disciples, who had known each other through their shared contact with Jesus, and came out of it as brothers and sisters, prepared to do anything for one another. I would remind them that after their time at camp would be done, I would no longer be their counselor or any authority, but would remain their friend; Jesus did the same, and Jesus was a far greater authority than I could ever be. In Jesus, the only command that matters is this command to love our friends, and to love them fiercely and without reservation. When we do so, and when we realize that the whole world is being invited into this circle of friends, everything else falls away into irrelevance. We are loved, and so we love. It is so simple that we need many commands and long periods of study to understand it, but even so, the sole command of Christ is to love each other in lasting friendship. As my time at Bethlehem comes to an end, I am grateful for the friends I’ve made here, and I take heart from the fact that the friendship I’ve found here is out there as well, within other church communities and out in the world. Wherever the Holy Spirit reaches, wherever Christ has gone before us, we will find friends. Amen.