

Daniel Waldschmidt – John 15:9-17 – May 6th, 2018

What would make your joy complete? I'm going to suggest to you today that in order for our joy to be complete, we need other people.

I think it's fair to say that people today are becoming increasingly disconnected from each other. I saw a commercial once where the entire family was seated around the dinner table and each one of them was on their phone. So sometimes even when we are together, we're not together. But even though we are increasingly disconnected from others, it's also true that deep down we long to be connected to other people. The phenomenon of social media shows that we long to be connected to other people. Deep down we know that our joy is not complete unless we are connected to other people.

And this makes sense because the true God, the God who created us, is the triune God. You learned in catechism that there is only one God, but there are three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. And the Father and the Son love the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.**" The persons of the Trinity love each other. And so it makes sense that God would create us with a longing to be connected to other people. Your joy is complete when you're connected to other people.

This is also true in your life of faith. Today is confirmation Sunday. And confirmation is certainly an individual thing. Each one of the confirmands says, "I believe in Jesus as my Savior. And I believe that what I've learned in catechism is a faithful testimony to what God's word says." So confirmation is an individual thing, but when you say the Apostle's Creed today, you're going to say it together. And whenever we say the Creeds in church, we say them together as a group, because when we say the creeds you can look around and realize: "Other people believe the same thing I do. What I'm saying I believe connects me to the other Christians here and Christians across the world and across the centuries." That makes our joy complete. So in order for our joy to be complete, we need other people.

But we need to think further about our need for other people because sin has warped our hearts so much that we often view other people in terms of what we can get from them. This tendency to view other people in terms of what we can get from them even warps our idea of love, so that we tend to love those who benefit us in some way. But that can't be the Bible's idea of love, because Jesus said, "Love your enemies." So in the Bible the idea of love can't be about what I get from the other person. In the Bible love is not about getting. Love is about giving. What does John 3:16 say? "**God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.**" The Father and the Son love you. The Father loves you so much that gave his only Son into death so that you would have eternal life. The Son loves you much that he laid down his life for you. Jesus says, "**Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.**" (John 15:12). Jesus laid down his life for us and Jesus even calls us his friends. And since we've been shown that kind of love from Jesus, it inspires us to show love to others. If we view other people in terms of what we can get from them, then that won't make our joy complete. But if we view other people in terms of what we can give to them. Then that will make our joy complete.

Jesus says, **“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ... This is my command: love each other.”** Martin Luther once defined sin as being “curved in upon yourself.” The tragic thing about being curved in upon yourself is that it is never going to make your joy complete. Selfishness will never make your joy complete because selfishness is never satisfied. But whereas selfishness is never satisfied, showing love is never exhausted. If you are curved in upon yourself, your selfishness is never satisfied, but if you are oriented toward showing love to your neighbor, your joy is never exhausted. Love is not about getting. Love is about giving. And the ironic thing is that if you give of yourself to show love to others, then your joy will be complete. When we are filled up with the love Jesus has for us and then share that love with others, our joy is complete. Jesus said, **“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”** (John 15:9-12)

You confirmands, when you confess your faith today you are going to be making other peoples' joy complete. Think about how you are going to make your parents' joy complete. Many Christian parents pray for their children, “God, please strengthen their faith. Please keep them strong in the faith for their whole lives.” Well, today you are going to stand up and say, “I believe in Jesus as my Savior. And I promise to stay faithful to Jesus my whole life long.” Think about that makes your parents' joy complete! Jesus says, **“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love”** (John 15:9). Stay faithful to the promises you make today. Continue to fill yourselves up every day with the love that Jesus has shown to you and then share that love with others, and your joy complete. Amen.