

Sermon for Sunday, 1 June 2025

Title: Joy, Invitation, Love

Readings: Acts 16:9-15, Revelation 21:10-14, 22:1-5, John 17:23-39

Introduction:

Good morning, brothers and sisters. Today, as we reflect on the Word of God, three powerful themes emerge: **joy, invitation, and love**. These are not just abstract ideas but gifts God offers us daily. Let us open our hearts to receive them.

1. Joy That Transcends Circumstances

Our first reading (Acts 16:9-15) tells the story of Paul and Silas—beaten, imprisoned for preaching the Gospel and doing God’s work, yet praying and singing hymns at midnight. How could they rejoice in such suffering? Because their joy was not grounded in their situation but in the Holy Spirit.

The Book of Acts could rightly be called *"The Acts of the Holy Spirit."* When we are filled with God’s Spirit, we too can experience a joy that no prison, no hardship, no disappointment can take away.

Mother Teresa once said, "Let nothing make you so afraid that you forget the joy of the risen Christ." The joy of the Risen Christ is our anchor, our hope. No matter what we face, we are created by God, loved by Jesus, and destined for eternal life. As Blessed Julian of Norwich wisely said, "God made us, God loves us, and God will look after us." Let us cling to this joy!

2. God’s Open Invitation

In Revelation (21:10-14, 22:1-5), we hear a beautiful invitation from Jesus: "Come!" Jesus calls us to Himself—to the river of life, to the healing of nations, to eternal communion with Him. Our earthly journey has a destination, not to the grave, but life with God in heaven forever.

God’s love is so boundless that *until our last breath*, He extends this offer. The question is: **Will we accept it?**

Imagine a king inviting a beggar to a feast. That’s what God does for us. He says, "Come, just as you are." Will you take His hand today? Will you step into deeper friendship with Him?

3. The Love That Unites Us

Finally, in John 17, Jesus prays for himself; for his disciples, and for us. His prayer for us is twofold:

1. For Unity – Jesus prayed "That we may be one, as He and the Father are one." Our unity as Christians is a witness to the reality of Jesus in the world. Jesus is not asking for uniformity, but for a reconciled diversity. Division weakens our testimony, but love strengthens it.

2. For Love – Jesus prayed "That the Father may love us as He has loved Him." Think about that—the same love the Father has for Jesus is extended to you and me. Wow!

St. John Henry Newman powerfully words come to mind as we reflect on God's love for us:

God beholds me individually, whoever I am. He "calls me by my name". He sees me and understands me, as He made me. He knows what is in me, all my own peculiar feelings and thoughts, my dispositions and likings, my strength and my weakness. He views me in my day of rejoicing and my day of sorrow. He sympathises in my hopes and my temptations. He interests Himself in all my anxieties and remembrances, all the risings and fallings of my spirit. He has numbered the very hairs of my head and the cubits of my stature. He compasses me round and bears me in His arms. He takes me up and sets me down. He notes my very countenance, whether smiling or in tears, whether healthful or sickly. He looks tenderly upon my hands and my feet. He hears my voice, the beating of my heart and my very breathing. I do not love myself better than He loves me...

You are seen, known, and loved with an everlasting love. The risen, and ascended Christ is waiting for us, and nothing shall separate us from His love (cf. Romans 8:31-18)

Conclusion:

So today, let us:

- Choose joy—not because life is easy, but because Christ is risen, and ascended into heaven.
- Accept the invitation—to come to Jesus and receive His abundant life.
- Live in love—united as Christ's body, assured of the Father's boundless love.

May we leave this place today as people marked by **joy, invitation, and love**—for the glory of God and the transformation of the world. Amen.

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Anglican Parish of Kingscliff

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