



Youth Sunday



Sermon By
Kristian Amundson

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Grace Episcopal Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

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The 5th Sunday of Easter
May 3, 2015

This past Friday was National Decision Day for all college-bound high school seniors. For many people this is the biggest change that they will undergo in their life. It marks the beginning of an independent life away from home and away from Mom and Dad, something that excites all high school students and scares all parents. For me it means that for the next four years my new home will be in Washington, Pennsylvania attending Washington & Jefferson College, and for my mom it means that her new favorite hobby will be checking the forecast for Washington, Pennsylvania to make sure there are no tornadoes or hurricanes coming.

Change is one of the few common factors in all of our lives, yet it consists of nothing more than gain and loss, birth and death, bearing fruit and pruning branches. We change as people throughout our lives. We all go through a slightly embarrassing rebellious phase in our teen years. I often entertain myself by thinking about what some of you all looked like as rebellious teens. But we age out of our mohawks and dyed hair, and we change as a person, often for the better.

As I said earlier, change is nothing but gain and loss. However we seem to struggle more with the idea of loss. Even in instances of gain such as a new job or new baby we are still apprehensive because of a loss of comfort. We all experience loss on such a regular basis that we often overlook all the little things we lose in our life: physical loss, loss of a loved one, loss of possession, change in the way we react with the physical world around us, personal loss, breakups, change in personality, change in the way we interact with ourselves and others, spiritual loss, change in the way we interact with God (often caused by a physical or personal loss that causes us to question the nature of God).

Now life is not all about loss, though that is a big part of it. We feel loss because of its opponent, love. We wouldn't feel pain when someone died if we did not love them, and thus loss serves as a reminder of God's greatest gift to us: love.

“Whoever claims to love god, yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.” An enduring faith in Jesus Christ, our belief in God, and our very creed as Christians is really just a continual investment in the thing with the highest return: love.

In the world we live in, where acts of violence and hate are perpetrated under the guise of justice or right, we have to remember that our responsibility is to love God and thus love all of his children, regardless of race, age, weight, religion, sexuality, or ideals.

Apathy, or the lack of love, is a shield to protect us from feeling loss and pain. Having just turned eighteen I have lost my ability to be apathetic. I used to be able to tell myself, “I am a child; I cannot stop police brutality. I cannot stop institutionalized racism. I cannot stop gender inequality.” And thus I justified my apathy. While the death of Trayvon Martin and Eric Garner were morally

wrong, I did not feel a big sense of loss because I took the easy way out. I chose to be apathetic. I chose to act out of fear of loss and pain rather than out of a love of God and his creation. Now that I'm eighteen and registered to vote and registered for the draft, I find it harder to claim the side of ignorance and apathy. Maybe it's that I'm now legally an adult or that Baltimore is a lot closer than St. Louis, but the death of Freddie Gray and the subsequent riots have been accompanied with a bigger sense of pain for me. But this pain is different. This pain stems from the lack of change in a system that I now find myself a part of, a system that accepts profiling and injustice. Just two short months ago I could have written this off as a product of an older generation, but now I am forced to confront my own inaction, my own ignorance, my own apathy. I believe this confrontation represents the biggest question we as Christian adults have to ask ourselves. Will we side with apathy and protect ourselves from the pain that accompanies loss, or will we side with love and accept the pain that comes with it. Every death, every loss, every change is just another opportunity for us to make the right decision and choose love; to choose God.

Amen.