

**Kyle Evan's Sermon. May 19, 2006,**  
**during the weekly Friday 10 a.m. Holy Communion Service,**  
**St. Luke's ACK Church, Kitale, Kenya**

**John 15:12-17**

<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.

Good morning. For those who may not know me, my name is Kyle Evans. I am Director of Youth & Children's Ministries at Trinity Episcopal Church in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. This is my third visit to the Kitale Diocese of Kenya through Mwamba Church Ministries International. I am always humbled in the midst of the people of the Kitale Diocese of Kenya, for your faith is deep and your love of one another is limitless. The fact that Father Emmanuel has asked me to offer a homily in this morning's service to leaders of the Diocese and the Gospel is on the very commandment of loving one another is rather intimidating. However, I will do my best to honor the privilege of sharing with you.

John 15:12-17 is perhaps one of the best known passages in the New Testament. In fact, John 15:12 is Jesus' greatest commandment, “Love one another as I have loved you”. There can be comfort in the familiar and yet there can also be desensitizing. This morning, perhaps we can be reawakened to what Jesus is truly asking of us.

Last winter during an intergenerational Confirmation Class on the Baptismal Covenant at my church, students were asked to talk about the part in the Covenant with which they most associated. An older member of the group spoke about her struggle with loving each other as fully as Jesus loved us. She said that, to her, love is an emotion reserved for only those most precious and closely held in our lives. I celebrated her honesty, for I believe that many, consciously or otherwise, live out our lives in the same struggle.

I want to touch on two compelling reasons to truly commit ourselves to Jesus' message in the reading. The first is that the unconditional, unfettered love of God and Jesus is so great, in some ways incomprehensible, that our response to such truly mandates obedience and commitment to offer the same to others. In recent weeks, many of the readings, especially the Gospels, have provided a repeated theme-that we are chosen ones, the most sacred and beloved of God. His love for us is unending. In exchange, he asks us to strive for the same commitment to our faith and to our fellow man and woman. Perhaps this morning's passage is the ultimate expression of this message- Jesus' love was so great for us, the most precious to him, those who he chose, that he died for us. As those who received all of Jesus' teachings, who have been blessed to be called not servants but friends in Christ, we are not just asked but commanded to strive for that same depth of love with others.

As we move through the Easter season, it is easy to place Jesus' unmatched sacrifice in the distance, to rest in the resurrection. Yet, as we struggle in our relationships with one another, family, friends and those we are just getting to know, we need to return to Holy Week to remember that in the face of betrayal, incredible pain and suffering, Christ's love remained constant and ultimately he laid down his life to wash us clean. Undoubtedly, our sacrifice in forging and deepening relationships, though certainly difficult, challenging and,

yes, even painful at times, can never compare to what Jesus sacrificed for us. It is our commandment to remember his suffering, perhaps even steep ourselves in it and strive to live with the same conviction and passion.

Though we may be tempted to relate to the commitment to love one another in the context of our relationship as individual believers with Jesus, the power of honoring this commandment truly evolves as we are bound together in loving one another. Yesterday, most of the Mwamba US team made a visit to St. Patrick's Secondary School in Waitaluk. The time that we spent with the staff, students and board members was special in many ways. However, for me, the most powerful part of the experience was the stories that were told. We were reminded of the elitism and racism in the colonial period in Kenya's history and even a personal accounting of the loss of the School Board Chair's father at the time of the fight for freedom. The betrayals, the horrors of human violence and atrocities were not left on the cross. They have continued throughout history into the present day. We are commanded to love one another as Jesus loved us as a way to combat this evil. For if we truly accept ourselves as God's chosen, recognizing the love that he has for us and strive to share that same love with others, then we grow the Body of Christ, thereby helping to combat the outrageous atrocities of humanity.

Mwamba Kenya, Mwamba US and the people of the Dioceses of Pennsylvania and Kitale have a unique opportunity to live out this commandment together. Though our relationship is still in its infant stage, genuine love for one another and growing understanding of each other's culture has already begun. Imagine what the future holds for us. I invite all of us to use the last week of our time together to discern ways that we can continue this commitment to one another and truly love one another as Christ loved us. God has brought us together for a purpose and his intentions are rich with possibilities. For remember we have been appointed "to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last".

Amen