Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Pr. Ann Elizabeth Rosendale
May 9, 2012

John 15: 1-11

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 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. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

I used to be sure that being faithful was all about being radical. Some days I’m still sure of it...that fidelity to God means dismissing almost everything the world calls good...money, possessions, a nice job, a spouse, and 2.2 kids. I’m captivated by stories of martyrs and missionaries...people who gave up everything they had for the sake of the Gospel.
There’s no question about it, radical faith is alluring. It’s sexy. It sounds glamorous...committing to follow Jesus with such wild abandon.

But there another way of being faithful that’s less exciting. Sometimes it seems less difficult, and less passionate too.

It’s the faith that my 85-year-old grandmother has, and that my parents, at 60, are just starting to have themselves.

It’s a steadier faith than the faith that I strive for. More even keel, less risky. Sometimes it seems like a lazier faith. Easier. Safer. Certainly less sexy.

I’m critical of faith like this...because it looks less like going and doing and more like staying and being. I think my parents ought to be taking their cues from my enthusiasm to be more radical. Come on, mom and dad, get fired up, go out on a limb, take a chance, do something crazy for Jesus!

And then I read John 15. And the same Jesus that I’ve been getting all crazy for is talking about abiding. “Abide in me,” he says, “as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”

Abide. Some translations use the word “remain.” Remain in me. Abide in me. It sounds a lot like the steady faith of my grandmother that I’m so critical of.

So I try to abide. I try to just sit and stay and be in my faith. And it’s hard. Way harder than I thought.

Because I have a tendency bop around a lot, from one idea to another, from this believe to that, from cause to cause, church to church. As impassioned as my faith is, it is usually more disjointed than it is consistent.

Yesterday morning I met with the Koinonia, pre-seminary group. I shared a bit of my call story with them. As I listened to myself talk, I heard me say a lot of things about being radical, taking chances for God,
doing things that were outside of the box. But I didn’t hear a whole lot in my own story about abiding.

Going on adventures and taking risks, these are the things that make a great tale of faith...not the story of my grandmother who has worshipped at the same little Presbyterian church, abiding there, Sunday after Sunday, for practically her whole life.

And yet Jesus says...abide in me.

Abiding is difficult. If we think that faith that travels to the far ends of the earth to serve and sacrifice is the toughest thing we could do, we are kidding ourselves. In a fast-paced world where we can't wait for the next thing...the next iphone, the newest season of our favorite reality show, the hippest trend in music and worship styles...in a fast-paced, impatient, looking for the next new fix kind of world, the greater challenge is simply to be, to remain, to abide, and to find contentment even when things aren’t fresh and exciting.

Radical faith is deceiving because we really do believe that we're abiding in God when we're gallivanting from one form of piety to the next. We read more, and pray harder, and buy less, and work for social justice. It really does feel like we’re getting closer to Jesus.

But however well-intentioned we are about getting out of the safe boxes of faith that we’ve come to resent, vines and branches need roots. Roots that keep them in one place for a while...roots that help to steady them...roots that keep Creator and creation abiding in one another.

One of the reasons that I’m so grateful for my college education, and for yours, is because of the way that it stretches us...to see new perspectives and entertain new ideas and explore new places and try out new ways of believing.

But it’s important to remember that at college all of these new ideas and perspectives are pretty exotic. Faith is sexy here...because faith here happens through inspiring professors, and high energy bible study groups, and once-in-a-lifetime trip opportunities.
We can start to think these radical, out-of-the-box experiences are normative for having faith.

My grandmother never went to college, never took a spring break mission trip, never attended the kind of high-energy bible study groups that I did.

And somehow she still became a woman of deep faith. Abiding faith. Faith that is rooted even more deeply than my well-educated, well-traveled, get-crazy-for-Jesus kind of faith.

The challenge for a community that wants to be on the cutting edge of excellence, is to remember that there’s value in just abiding too. That, in fact, faith is found in abiding, in simply remaining as we are, and trusting that God is also abiding.

And God does abide. Christ abides in us and with us, so that we’re not settling into faith alone. Jesus promises to abide in solidarity with us, calling us to radical stillness, coaxing us to be rooted more deeply when we start to go too far out on a limb.

So abide, dear friends. Abide in Christ even more deeply than you already are. Know that sometimes simply abiding is the most radial, most faithful thing that you can do. You will find Jesus there, already abiding in us and with us.

Amen.
Holy Communion
Wednesday, May 9, 2012

Prelude “Gabriel’s Oboe”
Devon Ratliff-Crain - Oboe
Marilyn Schempp - Keyboard

Invocation

Opening Prayer
L: You are the vine, we are the branches.
C: Abide with us, O God.
L: Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself,
C: Abide with us, O God.
L: When our branches are cut off,
C: Abide with us, O God.
L: When they are thrown into the fire and burned,
C: Abide with us, O God.
L: And when our branches grow, and bloom, and bear much fruit,
C: Abide with us, O God.

Hymn “Abide with Me” ELW #629 v. 1

Scripture John 15: 1-11

Sermon

Hymn “Abide with Me” ELW #629 vv. 2-3

Holy Communion
Special Music “Alleluia” arr. Randall Thompson
Angelus

Blessing

Benediction

Postlude “Psalm 100” arr. Rene Clausen
Angelus
Lisa Grevlos, Director

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

MIDNIGHT MADNESS - Our church neighbor to the south, Our Savior’s Lutheran, is graciously opening their doors again for a lovely night of finals study space, munchies and hospitality. Sunday, May 13th, from 6 pm to midnight. Pizza will be served at 10 pm. The building is equipped with WiFi. Go green - bring your own water bottle! COME AND BRING YOUR FRIENDS!!

SENIOR SERMON - Would you like to preach a sermon next year before you graduate? The sign-up sheet is out on the Narthex table! Fall dates are filling up fast, so if you are studying abroad or student teaching second semester, sign-up soon would be advisable. Prs. Paul and Ann are available for assistance in preparing your service.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Fri., May 11th Morning Worship, 10 am - Amanda Buhl, Sr. Spkr.
Sun., May 13th Morning Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul

There are no regular chapel services during Finals Week, however the chapel is open for prayer and rest. We hope you have a great summer!
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Wednesday, May 9, 2012

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“Gabriel’s Oboe”
arr. Mark McGurty
Devin Ratliff-Crain - Oboe
Marilyn Schempp - Keyboard

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