May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

About three years ago I heard a story about, a young girl, 13 years old. Her family struggled with finances, but were happy living together. The girl received news that changed her world. She learned that her mother was very ill and was terminal. When the mother began losing her hair, she eventually cut it all off. The girl, knowing what was coming, took the mother’s cut hair and put it in a plastic bag. She did that, so that when she was left without her mother, she would at least have something as a part of the most precious person in her life – a physical piece of evidence of her mother. I suppose she believed that somehow it carried her presence. For her, that hair was almost like the last gift that she would receive from her mother.

At a deeper level, holding on to that plastic bag with her mother’s hair, revealed her desire to be connected, to be remembered, to have and to know her place in life. We all want that. Regardless of how old we are or the circumstances of our lives, we want to know: Who am I? What are the connections that will sustain my life? Where is my place in this world?

Those are the questions Jesus is addressing as he speaks to his disciples in today’s gospel. It is the evening of the last supper. Jesus is speaking his final words, one last sermon, to his disciples. He is preparing them for life without his physical presence, foreshadowing what resurrected life, Easter life, is to be like. He offers some direct answers to those questions: You are my friends. Abiding love, [laying down life kind of love](https://interruptingthesilence.com/2012/04/29/a-laying-down-life-kind-of-love-a-sermon-on-1-john-316-24-and-john-1011-18-easter-4b/), - is [the connection that will sustain](https://interruptingthesilence.com/2012/05/07/the-fruitfulness-of-staying-connected-a-sermon-on-john-151-8-easter-5b/) you.

Our searching for those answers is ultimately our searching for Christ. That searching is always there but it becomes more acute in times of change: the death of a loved one, kids growing up and moving out, a new job, retirement, illness, a move to a new town, a marriage or a divorce. In those moments we want something to hold on to, something to comfort, encourage, and reassure us; even a plastic bag with a mother’s hair that will guide us through life.

I hope that with time passing by that growing up young girl one day will realize that it is not her mother’s hair in the bag that it is the gift – the gift is, the mother. Her mother was the last thing she touched when she hugged and kissed her. She was the one who gave the girl last minute instructions, “I must go very soon my love. Have courage, and be kind. She was the one who received her mother’s words, “I love you.”

Sadness, fear, and desperation often cause us to grasp for our own plastic bags in one form or another. We put them into our pockets and hope and try to create a connection that already exists, maintain a presence that is already eternal, and hang on to a love that is already immortal. We do this not only with one another but also with Christ. With each plastic bag we collect, we forget or maybe deny that our lives embody the shared and mutual love of Christ and one another. In His love is the fullness of presence; a presence, the disciples will learn, that transcends time, distance, and even death.

At some point we must throw away our plastic bags so that we can hear, experience, and live the deeper truth. Our lives, our actions, our love carry and reveal the presence of divine love. Jesus does not give us something…, he says: We are something. We are the gift. We are the connection. Listen to what he tells the disciples:

* I love you with the same love that the Father loves me. You have what I have.
* I give to you the joy that my Father and I share. You are a part of us
* You are my joy, my life, and my purpose
* I want your joy to be full, complete, whole, and perfect
* You are my friends, my peers, my equals
* I have told you everything. Nothing is held back or kept secret.
* I chose you. I picked you. I wanted you.
* I appointed, ordained, commissioned, and sent you to bear fruit, to love another. I trust and believe you can do this.

It’s all about us in the best sense of those words. We are the love of Christ. Our belief in Jesus’ words changes how we see ourselves, one another, the world, and the circumstances of our lives. That belief is what allows us to keep his commandment to love one another. When we know these things about ourselves our only response is love. We can do nothing else. We are free to live and more fully become the love of Christ. Amen.