

You Shall Love

Psalm 1

Matthew 22: 34-46

Introductory Talk

It has been said that love may not make the world go around, but it sure makes the trip worthwhile. Jesus opened our eyes to the true nature of love. We read in our Gospel Reading today: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Even The first Book of the Old Testament Genesis, speaks of love. That God, in His love, created mankind. Life does not precede love. Love precedes life! In His Love, God Created mankind.

In our text, Jesus speaks of three directions of love: love toward God, love toward others and love toward self. Our love for God must take priority over everything in life.

The amount of time you spend with God being in his presence speaking with him in prayer, is a reflection of how much you love him. The amount of time you spend reading his Holy Word, is a reflection of how much you love Him. Our lives should yearn to be in the presence of our heavenly father. The love of God is what gave us life in creation. The love of God is what sought us out and offers us salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Jesus taught that if love is to be fully manifested, we must love God first, others second, and self, last.

Yet Far too many of us have got it completely backwards! The Scriptures speak with authority; the Scriptures speak with Truth. If we love God, then, and only then will our love grow. And this Love of God supernaturally produces a love for others and for us. In fact, if we love God most, we will love others best.

The theologian C.S. Lewis put it this way, "When I have learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now."

Our love for God inescapably motivates us to love others, to love our neighbours. But it can be hard to love everyone at times.

Wee story. An elderly couple had a neighbour across the street who would not for some reason, give them the time of day. But That did not stop them from cheerfully saying: "Hi!" every time the neighbour was in his garden.

One day a little boy asked the couple, "Why do you all bother to say "hi" to that man? He never even looks your way. He never says "hi" back!" The elderly couple answered very matter of fact with no explanations or complaints: "Because we are Christians."

We are called to love our neighbour, even if they do not reciprocate in kind. You know, you're not living if you're not loving. We are loved and cherished by the God who created the heavens and the earth. Jesus overcame hate, evil and death through His sacrificial act of Ultimate love on the cross!!!

Just think how full this life would be if all of us practiced love!

Main Talk

Sandra Palmer Carr, in the devotional booklet "The Upper Room," told about rocking her younger son, Boyd, who was then four years old. They were in a high-backed rocking chair, and Boyd was looking up at his mum as they rocked. Suddenly, he lifted his little head, stared straight at his mother, and became very still. Then he cupped her face in his tender little hands and said almost in a whisper, "Mummy, I'm in your eyes."

He had seen his own reflection in his mother's eyes, and it was a startling discovery. Sandra stopped rocking and held Boyd in that same position for several long moments, then said quietly, "And I am in your eyes too!" Then he leaned his head against her contentedly and she resumed rocking. Occasionally, in the days that followed, Boyd would check to see if his discovery was still true. "Am I still in your eyes, Mummy?" he would ask as he reached up to take her face in his hands.

Sandra thought about the love of God for her and said, "In life's uncertain moments, it is comforting to know that I am still in my heavenly Father's eyes."

Folks, opening your lives to others means that we also have them in our eyes.

In his first letter, John wrote, "We love because God first loved us." Maybe we could say, "Because God first had us in His eyes, we are able to have others in our eyes."

There are two extremely powerful Yet simple principles that can transform any relationship almost overnight. Here is the first: When it comes to love, say it. We need to say it we need to hear ourselves say it. Others need to hear us say it and we need to hear it from others.

A wee story. Four-year-old Martha, hugging a doll in each of her little arms, looked wistfully up at her mother and said, "Mummy, I love them and love them, but they never love me back."

Could this be our problem? God loves us and loves us and loves us, but we never love Him back? Or perhaps we never love Him back the way He deserves to be loved! When it comes to love, say it. And The second principle is this: When it comes to love, show it! Love must not only be articulated but it needs to be demonstrated.

In the great "love chapter" in, 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul constantly says, "Love is, love does, love is not, love does not." Love is proactive it is tangible it is practical it is personal. A simple touch can convey an incredible sense of love, of affirmation, of acceptance.

A study conducted several years ago found that to maintain physical and emotional health, men and women need 8 to 10 meaningful touches each day. These researchers defined a meaningful touch as a gentle tap, a stroke, a kiss, or a hug, given by someone who was "significant in their life" like a husband, wife, parent, or friend. Good husbands hug their wives. Good football managers let players know they are appreciated. Good managers and executives give employees encouraging pats on the back. And good Christians hug each other, smile at each other, laugh with each other.

You're not living if you're not loving.

Love sets off a divine chain reaction.

Love is the spark that kindles the fire of compassion.

Compassion is the fire that lights the candle of service.

Service is the candle that ignites the torch of hope .

Hope is the torch that lights the beacon of faith.

Faith is the beacon that reflects the power of God.

God is the One Who creates the miracle of love! Jesus said that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. On the surface, some might see this as a mandate for self-love. But when we consider His words in context, we see that the principle Jesus gave us is both radically new and wonderfully refreshing!

Essentially, Jesus has declared that when we love God the way we ought to love God, we will love others the way we ought to love others. And when we love God and others as the Scriptures command us, we will find a peace and a love for our self that passes all understanding. Folks, the Gospel text begins "You Shall love." It requires you to do something. You shall Love.

Evangeline Booth, the daughter of the founder of the Salvation Army, sat in a squalid slum one morning, cleaning the sores of a drunken woman. "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars," said a friend, "Neither would I," replied Ms. Booth.

As Christians, we need to yield to the Holy Spirit and allow God to enable us to become better at loving. Allowing God's love to flow through us to others involves change. it involves risk. But it will bring a tidal wave of joy that washes and cleanses your very soul even in the most difficult moments of life.

Are you in relationship with the one true God? Do you know Jesus Are you maturing. in your faith? Is your Passion for him bursting from your very soul? "You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength - and - you shall love your neighbour as yourself"

You shall love your neighbour. How can we not love? If we have encountered the risen Christ, how can we do anything else but love? Only those who have encountered the Christ will persevere to finish the race and to finish well.

Folks love the Lord your God with all your heart.
Love your neighbour as yourself.

God knows your heart. God knows you desire that passion. May each of us be on fire with a passion.

A Passion to love the Lord your God with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds and to love our neighbours as ourselves. You shall Love. For you're not living, if you're not loving. Amen