

Loving So Others May Live

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Year B: Easter 6: John 15:9-17

May 8-9, 2021

Love. God loves Jesus and Jesus loves us. You and me. That love cannot stop- it moves to include more and more until love lays down its life for another.

[Jesus said:] ⁹“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I 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. ¹⁶You 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. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

God’s grace to you this day! On this Mother’s Day we give thanks to God for all women and the motherly care they offer us. We treasure our Mother’s love, we miss our mother’s love, we don’t understand or long for motherly love, we want to love as a mother. All of these are wrapped up in Mother’s Day.

There is much wrapped up in the Gospel lesson as well! Jesus speaks of love and friendship. He talks about the kind of love which would actually make a person die for another person. It doesn’t take long to listen to the English language and know that we “love” all sorts of things!

“Love. It’s what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.”

“My dog loves those treats.”

“We loved that new Netflix series.”

“All you need is love.”

“Make love not war.”

“I love that new shirt on you.”

“Do you love me?” (Working Preacher Michael Chan <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/rethinking-love>)

We use the word love in many different ways. We use it as casually as throwing a ball and as seriously as parents losing their own children. If I asked you what you love, you might have many statements like the ones I just read. “Love is what makes the world go ‘round.’” Right?

I once heard a preacher say, that every weekend, no one should leave a worship service without hearing that God loves them! So listen up! God loves you! Hear those words. Soak them up deep into your soul. Let God’s love run over your head and shoulders, into your heart, and all the way to your feet so you can stand on that truth.

God loves you unconditionally, with full intention, full and open heart. God desires to know you, spend time with you, watch you grow and learn as you grow in loving God and one another.

God is the creator of love, God exists in love and God loves you. Period. Got it? Heard it? Fabulous!

Now, we know that God so loved this world, God sent God's only Son, Jesus. Jesus embodied the fullness of God's love with every person He encountered. God the Father shared love with Jesus and then Jesus shared it with us. He shared it with people in first century Israel and with you and me today.

What does this love look like? Love draws us in. If you offer your dog a treat, your dog will come towards you. If you offer a child a gift, they will be drawn to you. Love makes us feel safe. When we know unconditional love, we feel safe to rest in the arms of another. There is peace of being between two people when love is safe. Love also pushes us out. Love makes us take risks...to ask her out on that first date. To bear a child. Love encourages us to try new things and move out of our comfort zone.

Love is not what makes a Subaru a Subaru. Love is so much more! Love is so much more, especially God's love.

The ancient Greeks understood love between friends as the kind of love which would make one literally die for another. And in this text Jesus calls us friends. He calls us friends because He has kept nothing from us. Everything God the Father has shared with Jesus....Jesus has shared with us. There has been transparency in this love relationship. Transparency which takes our relationship with Jesus and God to a very deep level!

The love between we and our creator is not some superficial, fly by night, one night stand kind of attraction. No! This love is deep, rich, safe and gives us room to grow and hope and live within a world of death and decay.

But...this text is really about the love which allows another to live. We all might believe we should love our neighbor. But in reality, many of us don't truly live and love beyond our small circle of friends and family. Jesus stretches us to love as the ancient Greeks did. He calls us to die for another. Now we all might believe we should die for our neighbor. But in reality, many of us know we're likely never going to actually die for anyone outside our small circle of friends and family. Besides if we put a message out front on the sign which said, 'Come follow Jesus and die!' our number of visitors would decrease drastically.

So let's go at it another way. What about loving so another might live? We – you and me here at King of Glory, already do that, don't we?! We give to World Hunger, we buy food for the pantries, we offering money to the Lorenz LuMin Legacy and Pillows for Sky Ranch! Yes, we know how to love so another might live.

Yet...because God has loved us and Jesus loves us...God is calling us to another level. How else can we love so another might live?

Do you remember the song, "They'll Know We are Christians by Our Love"? It was written by a Catholic priest by the name of Peter Scholtes. His youth choir in this parish on the south side of Chicago had been invited to participate in a series ecumenical and interracial events. He couldn't find a song to fit the occasion.

He wrote the lyrics in one day. And this famous folk song has lived on beyond its composer.

*We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand
We will walk with each other
We will walk hand in hand
And together we'll spread the news
That God is in our land*

*And they'll know we are Christians
By our love, By our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians
By our love*

*We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit
We are one in the Lord
And we pray that all unity
May one day be restored*

And they'll know we are Christians.....by our love!

The love described in this beloved song is an active love. One doesn't love from a distance, but from up close. Walking, praying, singing, with another is love which empowers new life. What does this look like for you? This laying down one's life. This loving so another may live?

Is it making a commitment that every trip to the grocery store 1-2 items on your list will be for the food pantry? Is it sponsoring a child in another country so they can have books for school? Is it reading a book on racism to better understand our siblings of color? What about praying for victims we read about in the newspaper? That too, is love in action.

Jesus' call is always there, to love so others may live. To lay down one's life. This week let us relish being loved and let us love as Christ did. Amen.