

Advent 2018 – Love – The Thing About Love

12/23/18

John 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

In the Bible we are told that “God is Love”. Love is not merely an attribute of God's character, love is the very core, essence, and nature of the Divine One. God is not just “loving” and able to love completely and perfectly, but God is love.

God is Spirit, beyond the physical, but present in every atom and sub-atomic particle in the Universe. Our bodies are imbued with God’s essence and with God’s love.

We are made in God’s image; we are spiritual beings, made from the same energy and nature as that of God. That God-energy, or spirit- awareness indwells these bodies so we are hybrid beings: physical and spiritual.

Because we are made in God’s image, we are also Love; our spiritual identity is comprised of love. And because we are physical beings, we are also comprised of love at the atomic level as well. In short, as God is Love, we are also love.

So what are we waiting for? Are we saving it all for Christmas? Author Kamand Kojouri wrote: “The thing about love is that you will never run out of it. It's an ever-flowing river. So go ahead and LOVE. What are you saving all this love for — death?”

Jesus was born into a time when people did not get it; they were not aware of their identity. So, God sent the soul of Jesus into this world as a guide, help, and savior from our darkness. As Jesus grew, he learned quickly the nature and teachings of God until he was able to completely connect with Divinity and identify who he clearly was: A Child of God. God filled Jesus with the awareness of who He was. Through this heightened awareness Jesus then transcended the physical world, combining his worldly identity with his spiritual identity to become Jesus the Christ – the perfect amalgamation of physical and spiritual evolution.

When he began his ministry, this is who he had become – God’s Son, God’s representative on earth of true spiritual Love within this physical dimension. The people then needed this guidance for intertwining love between their physical and spiritual natures.

Today, we need this guidance even more. The thing about love is that it is really big; there are many dimensions, layers, levels, facets and perspectives.

[I know of several types of love; some are not mentioned in the Bible. **Ludus** describes a more playful affection found in the flirting and teasing that takes place sometimes in the early stages of a friendship. It is the type of love shown by friends in fun situations.

Two more forms of love are identified by therapists but are not found in the Bible: **Storge** refers to cherishing one's kindred, especially parents or children. Storge is the mutual love and tenderness of parents and children and wives and husbands. The Greek word Storge does not appear in the Bible, but its opposite does. Astorgos

means "without love, devoid of affection, without affection to kindred, hard-hearted, unfeeling," and is found in the book of Romans and 2 Timothy.

Also, not mentioned in the Bible is **Pragma**, which is the mature love that develops over a long period of time between long-term couples and involves actively practicing goodwill, commitment, compromise and understanding.

One more form of love not mentioned in the Bible is called Mania. It is expressed through jealousy, possessiveness, neediness, and may lead to madness and obsessiveness. **Mania** love holds the partner in high esteem and wants to force them into showing love and emotion. Obviously, just from the word describing this form of love, it is rather dark and imbalanced.}

Then there are forms of love referred to in the bible. Eros is the most obsessed over form of love today. Today, many of us have forgotten our spiritual natures and are consumed by solely our physical essence. This is the physical love between a husband and wife and long-term life partners. It is the romantic passionate love. It is often partnered with Pragma love.

Today we here many songs about love, and these are primarily tied to Eros love, but not exactly. We 'fall in love' one week and 'fall out' of love the next. We think love hurts, has its ups and downs. This is not true spiritual love; this is more like infatuation. It is a wonderful human experience, but it is not related to spiritual love.

The Bible also refers to self-love, which the Greeks called **Philautic** love; it is referred to in the Bible, but not mentioned by name. The ancient Greeks divided Philautia into two kinds: There is one that is ego driven and seeks pleasure, fame, and wealth often leading to narcissism. Then there is a type of self-love that is spirit

driven. This is the healthy kind of love we give ourselves. Philautia is essential for any relationship, and as Aristotle discovered and as any psychotherapist will tell you, we can only love others if we truly love ourselves and we can only care for others if we truly care for ourselves.

The last two forms of love are the most common forms mentioned in the Bible. By far, the single most mentioned form of love referenced in the Bible is **Agape** love. This is how God loves all of us: it is impartial and unconditional. The Bible also refers to ‘brotherly love’ or ‘**phileo**’ love. This is the love that we show in the physical world as kindness, care, respect, and tolerance to one another. God wants us to express both types of love, and Jesus was the perfect example.

Well Patrick, can’t we just be good morally sound people? That is absolutely fine, and a great start; but there is more if we want to be connected to Spirit.

2 Peter 1:5-7 explains that demonstrating moral excellence in life is not enough. If we are to become ‘partakers of the divine nature’, we should also demonstrate familial and agape love in our lives. *“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness [phileo], and in your brotherly kindness, love [agape].”*

In Paul's letter to the Romans, in Chapter 12 verse 10 he describes how to feel toward one another, by saying "Be devoted to one another." This translates from the compound word *philostorgos*. It means to treat each other, to feel toward one another the feeling of family kindness. This is how we are being guided to see and treat each other – as part of one family.

1 Corinthians perfectly characterizes the agape love that God has towards us and that Jesus came to model for us. Love is described as patient, kind, truthful, unselfish, trusting, believing, hopeful, and enduring. It is not jealous, boastful, arrogant, rude, selfish, or angry. True love never fails. Love is said to be more important than all other 'good' things, including oratory ability, prophecy, knowledge, the understanding of all mysteries, faith, philanthropy, hope, or anything else. All these will pass away and only love, the foundation of all life, will endure. Jesus punctuates this sentiment by stating that the greatest commandment is: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." He then added that the second most important law was "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Note the brief reference to Philautic love, self-love.

The thing about love is that it is the answer; it is the foundation of every solution. We've heard the phrase "born again". Some folks hold that phrase dear and ask everyone they meet, "Are you born again?" Well, what does that really mean? Peter describes the process of rebirth in 1 Peter 22-23: *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. 23 For you*

have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 1 John 4:7 tells us, "Everyone who loves is born of God," and in 3:14: We pass from death to life when we love others. To be born again is to, at long last, embrace love: love of God, each other and ourselves.

If there were a message people needed to hear then, and we need to hear today, it is this: love each other. What better way to get our attention than through the birth of a baby? It is through this innocence and purity that the potential of the Living Christ was fulfilled by delivering this message.

This is the meaning of Christmas – originally, Christ Mass, or Christ worship service. Christmas was once upon a time when we honored and worshipped Jesus Christ and all that he stood for and represented; today, that presence of Christ within us still represents God and all of God's goodness and power here on earth for all times, and he stands for Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Advent concludes on Christmas Eve, and it is my prayer that each of us finds it within our hearts to honor what Christ came to offer: Life, Light, direction, abundance, forgiveness, Peace, Joy, and above all else, Love. It's all about Love.

I wish and pray that you each have a wonder-filled and spirit-filled, Christmas Day, and remember to unwrap and open those gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Let us pray....