

# Love – A Thing Worth Doing

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1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 14:1 can be summarized as:

- I. Without love all I say is ineffective.
- II. Without love all I know is incomplete.
- III. Without love all I believe is insufficient.
- IV. Without love all I give is insignificant.
- V. Without love all I accomplish is inadequate.

This Wednesday two important days coincide: Valentine's Day and Lent. They are important to two disparate cultures, the secular and the sacred, our human and our spiritual natures. Yet, surprisingly there are things in common.

First, neither one is Biblical. Neither God nor Christ, nor any Biblical spiritual leader, called upon us to celebrate either of these events. Second, at their core, both events ask us to look at the way we think and behave. And third, Love is their key. Lent asks us to examine our own natures and draw closer to God by withdrawing our small-self thoughts while increasing our Love of God and awakening our awareness of Christ. Valentine's Day celebrates love at various levels.

More on Lent next week, and I want to spend a little time on the love that Valentine's Day elicits.

This Wednesday I would like us to be thinking about love in multiple perspectives. Yes, it is important to marriages, families, and relationships. We will be sharing cards, candy, flowers, and

acts of service and love with those close to us. That is all an important part of love and Valentine's Day.

But love is bigger than every outer exhibition and demonstration. Love is important to our church, to the community, to the nation, to the world, and to God. In Paul's verse, we are basically nothing without love, and our lives are pretty meaningless.

To love is to give, sacrifice, and put others first. In his book, *What's Wrong With the World*, G.K Chesterson states: "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly." Now this is very different than what most of our parents taught us. What he is saying is that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth getting busy and doing it even if we are not yet skilled enough, talented enough, or educated enough. A thing worth doing is a thing that is acquired through effort and practice, not just thinking and dreaming.

I continue to play the guitar despite making mistakes. Through my mistakes I develop greater facility under the pressure of live performance. To play perfectly in my office is not sufficient; I must bring my playing into a performance situation. I must sacrifice my comfort and ego and love myself enough to risk embarrassment because I love you. I want to bring something of value to you through singing, playing, and the words and ideas I share. These are ways in which I can share my love with you. In my heart I believe that is a thing worth doing, even if it is sometimes done badly.

We are asked by Christ to share our love with each other; it is worth doing, and it is worth doing badly. We can practice opening

our hearts. We can practice giving of ourselves and releasing our fears so that our love can flow forth.

We can practice temperance in our own ways of believing so that we can connect with others who need our love. This is the point of the Good Samaritan story. A man (presumably a Jew) travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho is beaten, stripped of his clothing and left half dead alongside the road. When a Priest and a Levite came upon the man each avoided him by crossing to the other side of the road.

What is not obvious is that the Priest and the Levite were likely on their way to the temple in Jerusalem to worship God. They knew that if they touched the man the blood on their hands would make them unclean. They knew the Law, and what was the right thing to do in their minds, thus, they avoided the injured man.

Then came along a Samaritan. What is not stated is that in those days Samaritans and Jews thought ill of each other. They hated each other for their cultures, their religions, and their political beliefs. Yet, when this Samaritan saw the injured man he helped him. He tended the man's wounds; put him on his donkey and took him to an inn. He gave the innkeeper money and said whatever else was needed financially he would pay for it.

The Samaritan was able to move passed his own beliefs, temper his judgments, and do the 'thing worth doing'. This is what we are called to do by Christ: to love our neighbor. We do this by making our words effective, sincere, and more than just show. We love our neighbor by applying knowledge based upon the heart as well as

the head. Doing the right thing with the head, with laws, rules, and protocol is often vastly different from doing what our heart begs us to do.

We love our neighbor by allowing our faith to move past ritual and dogma and enter the realm of meaningfulness. We can apply our perseverance and pertinacity toward compassionately exemplary actions. We can share our love with our beloved spouse, with our family, friends, strangers, and our enemies.

With all the forms of love there is plenty to go around. Agape love is the love that the Christ wants us to have for everyone, even our enemies. It is the starting place for love; it is the place where we do not wish harm and are concerned for life. We may not like someone, we may not agree with them or even care for how they behave, think, or speak, but we can choose to love them in this manner, as did the Good Samaritan.

In the end, we struggle to understand love. It may be the most powerful force in the Universe; it may be the constituent essence of our God, but what does that mean? We know we love someone in a much different manner than we know that four plus one is five. Rather, we feel it; we sense it. It is something that bubbles up from within instead of something we deduce from a given set of data. It shapes and defines who we are as a parent, spouse, friend, child, or Child of God. Even with all the categorizations of the word 'love' and its multifarious meanings no one definition can encapsulate it.

And still, Love is a thing worth doing. Despite the nebulous meanings and imprecise applications, love is worth doing. So, we

take advantage of every possible situation and every moment to share the love within us. We simply don't know how long we have to express love. When Valentine's Day comes along, or birthdays, or Easter or Christmas, we jump on those occasions to practice our love sharing.

But we can make every day Valentine's Day. It is the simple things that show our love. Cook for your loved one: it is a labor of love, and isn't food the universal language of love? Write them a note: it doesn't have to be a novel, just a note expressing your appreciation. Say "Thank you" to your loved ones. Tell them you love them. How many more chances are you going to get?

Another way of expressing love is to help out, in whatever way makes sense – even if it is outside your comfort zone. Surprise your loved ones with a gift or special quality time. Take them to lunch, bring home some sushi for dinner. Tell them they look nice; you like their jacket, their hair, whatever catches your eye. Give them a hug and take their hand. Look them in the eye when you speak with them.

Many of us are selfish when it comes to love and expressing love. We want, but we often don't give. If we started doing all the things that we would like done unto us, we will start receiving in kind. If you love someone, don't wait for them to make you feel special; make them feel special first.

To paraphrase a quote mistakenly attributed to John Wesley, we are being called by God to love as many people as we can, by

every means we can, in every place we can, in every circumstance we can, for as long as we can.

No valentine card can ever be as beautiful or wonderful as the message that comes to our hearts from the heart of God — “My beloved child, I love you just as you are,” and the greatest gift we can give another is to shower them with our love and express that same message. That is what Valentine’s Day is about; that is what Love is about. It is a thing worth doing.

I wish you a Happy Valentine’s Day!

Let us pray....