

The Bonds of Love

Sermon Scripture: 1 John 4:7-12 John 15:9-17 I Cor. 13:5

“God is love.” How many times have we said that without really considering what "love" actually is, what love really entails? This morning I want you to look with me and examine some of the ways the church is called to embody love, and the binding and loosing power of love.

How is this body of Christ going to show God’s love to the world???

Our scripture shows love as the most characteristic manifestation of God we can ourselves imitate. Unfortunately "love" has become one of the most over-sentimental and meaningless words in our vocabulary.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines love in terms of sex and sports: (an "intense affection and warm feeling for another person; strong sexual desire for another person) a strong fondness or enthusiasm; or a zero score in tennis."

The sacrificial, incarnational nature of Christ-like love has been lost amid our claims that we "love" our favorite soft drink, basketball team, or partner-of-the-moment. Love has become such a nebulous, fuzzy, catch-all term that we resist thinking about what must be present for true love to exist and to flourish -----for love to be able to "bear fruit."

Couples are sometimes shocked when I tell them that I am not greatly concerned about their wedding but that I do care very much about their marriage.

The difference between the two is that a wedding is a ceremony where two people proclaim publicly their covenant of love for one another, to receive the community's affirmation and blessings, and to seek God's approval upon their union. This is good.

But Marriage, on the other hand, is a "lifetime commitment that binds two persons together so that they may build each other up, offer each other the gift of love, continue to grow and mature together, offer a strong home to children, and accept all their years together ... even when bearing children ruins the shape, when age brings lines in the face, when the passing of time turns dimples into double chins, and when one must finally stand by the casket of the other."

True love (unselfish and sacrificial) binds the lover completely and looses the much-loved unconditionally. This is the kind of love Christ gave us. By becoming a "bond-servant" to all, he loosed each one for eternal life. Paul says we are freed from everything----bound by nothing (loosed), yet a servant to everyone (bound).

Love---Did you know to love is good for your health----on the average that married people live longer than single people-----what is the reason-----Love----it brings health.

Feeling of love is like a drug-----

One sign of falling in love is a high feeling similar to that of an amphetamine boost, according to Dr. Michael R. Liebowitz of Columbia University. The brain releases a chemical, probably phenyl ethylamine, that acts like a stimulant, summoning up extra energy, boosting the heart rate, and making the world look great. People get hooked on it---just like a drug.

That is why if you break up with your loved one, the crash has a lot in common with drug withdrawal. Many people help their distress by eating much larger than usual amounts of chocolate, which also contains phenyl ethylamine.

There **is** healing in love. Can we love like that? Can we love each other enough to be their servant? Can we bind ourselves to each other so that we can loose each other and free them? Can we love each other enough for them to unload their baggage on us?

Good marriages, good families, good communities, good congregations build and bless these bond of love---- these "ties that bind."

In our Scripture John asserts that "love is of God" and that one who loves is "born of God and knows God"

When John continues this knowledge by experience line of argument in verse 8, he concludes that separation from love means separation from God. Characteristic of John's concern with defining God, he now reveals "God is love."

Love is not just one of God's many qualities, it is God's essence. Furthermore, God's love has now become manifest in another aspect of God's essence - God's Son Jesus Christ.

John has now articulated an original connection between knowledge and love. If human beings are to live up to their roles as being made in the image of

God and as imitators of Christ, then the knowledge to re-create in human experience is love - to "love one another." To "know" Jesus is to be "in him" and to "abide in him" (1 John 2:5,6).

In our worship scripture as part of his farewell discourse Jesus declares himself the "true vine," and his Father the vinedresser. John's point is that those who abide in Jesus are therefore part of this true vine - Distinguishing true from false is simple in this discourse, because those who have immersed themselves in the Christ will "bear fruit----the main fruit is love.

In John 15:2 Jesus stipulates that barren branches will be pruned from the vine, and that even apparently productive branches will be trimmed. The true Christians will be known by their fruits. **Their ability to incarnate or embody the love of God through Christ**

Jesus uses the word "abide" ten times in this illustration. Verses 10-13 make it clear that to abide in Jesus is to enter a costly domain, for what we are asked to inhabit is Jesus' sacrificial love, even unto death. Jesus promises those committed to embodying his love in their own lives that nothing would be beyond their ability to love.

Verses 7-8 assure struggling Christians that as long as they abide in Christ and allow God to practice skillful pruning there is nothing beyond the strength of their love.

Luke's story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch perfectly illustrates how the "true Christian bears its fruit. The story begins with Philip unhesitatingly responding to the voice of the Spirit, even when it calls him onto a deserted highway in the middle of a barren land.

Yet Philip's "pruning" has just begun. Down the wilderness highway, traveling directly into Philip's path, came a most unlikely character, an Ethiopian eunuch who was also a powerful and influential individual.

When Philip is directed to approach him, he meets this situation with enthusiasm, "running" to catch the eunuch in his chariot. The events that follow give Philip a chance to incarnate Christ's love and salvation as they were commanded at the beginning of Acts.

Philip's whole-hearted acceptance of this man despite his distance from the familiar Jewish convert extends the promise of Christ's salvation and bears fruit for God's glory far from the original branches.

Story

Many years ago a boy came and found his mother sitting at the table with (what was called in those days) an old tramp. Apparently she had gone shopping, met the tramp along the way, and invited him home for a warm meal. During the conversation the tramp said, "I wish there were more people like you in the world." Whereupon his mother replied, "Oh, there are. But you must look for them."

The old man simply shook his head, saying. "But, lady, I didn't need to look for you. You looked for me." When that mother reflected her Christian kindness toward the tramp she did something more than simply offer him welfare. It was a compassion that went out of its way to love the unlovely. And that's the story of our Savior's life, death and resurrection. He came looking for us, the sick, the maimed, the lame, the bruised, the broken hearted, the wretched wanderer, the poor and forgotten, the prisoner, and the lonely rich. Has he found you?

And-----the question is----do we as individuals and as a church of Jesus Christ have the love that takes us looking for those who are lost and in need??? It is the great binding power you know.

Love must be demonstrated or it is not love. I Cor. 13:5—Living Bible Translation----“Love does not demand its own way”

Holding hands is a demonstration of love and affection-----

Took a trip to Colorado a couple years ago-----I would see Jared and DeeAnn----walking together---holding hands----makes me happy to see that-----guys it is not sissifiedr f to hold hands-----

Jared and DeeAnn----I have one thing to say to you-----don't you ever stop.

In the Guinness Book of World Records there is listed the shortest sermon ever preached. It was given by John Albrecht, an Episcopal priest in Michigan. He stood in his pulpit to preach, paused, and said "Love!" He then sat down. Some of Albrecht's members said it was the best sermon he ever preached.