

A Life well lived with Love

Text: Acts 10:44-48

1 John 5:1-6 (Series B. 6th Sunday after Easter) Ps. 98

John 15: 9-17

(Jesus said,) "My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you."

Let us pray:

Today's Gospel reading from John tells us of Jesus' command to love one another. But before we go any further we need to ask the question, "What is love?" Modern people say they love everything from a member of the *opposite sex* to *Kentucky Fried Chicken*.

To some love is a devotion that idealizes and admires the person they love believing that they are perfect regardless of what they do. To others love is a selfish sentiment that cries out for attention and flattery.

When most people today think of love they think of it as an emotion or a feeling. It's that lump in your throat, or knot in your stomach when you're in the presence of that certain woman or man.

And what makes it even trickier is that our English language uses love in all kinds of contexts. Such as "I love my dog," or "I love my wife," or "I love my children, or my parents," or "I love chocolate," or "I love soft ice-cream on a hot summer's day".

How intrusive is this [Gospel] message against the back drop of *mistrust, hatred of "the others,"* and the seemingly endless and rampant violence across the world and even into our very local communities? *Them vs Us, You vs Me, This is Mine.*

But unless we look carefully at the context in which is being said, it isn't always clear. The love I have for my dog is completely different to the love I have for my children. And my love for my country is different to my love for my wife.

There were 4 different words for love in the Greek, the language of the New Testament.

- There is family love, **storgé**, that kind of love you might have for your parents or your children or your brothers and sisters.
- There is social love, **philia**, that sort of love you have for your close friends, those who are part of your social group.
- The sort of Love between wife or husband, **eros**.
- Finally, there is **agape**, love which is a practical love, a generous sacrificial love, love that loves even though the other person can be quite unlovable, a love that contains the idea of self-forgetfulness. This is the kind of love that Jesus is talking about when he says, *"My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them."*

Note that this kind of love is *commanded* by Jesus. It isn't an optional kind of love. It's not a matter of saying nice things or doing good to others if we happen to feel like it. The kind of love that Jesus is commanding here isn't the kind that leads you to do something nice because you have warm fuzzy feelings about that person. To put it bluntly this isn't a *"feel good"* kind of love. The kind of love that appeals to our emotions and feelings.

The kind of love that Jesus is talking about is a very practical kind of love. With a careful examination of the New Testament text, we will see all the ways that we are to love one another.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Is there any room for negotiation here? *Those people* are doing terrible things so how can Jesus possibly expect us to *love* them?

Well, whether or not he expects it is irrelevant, he *commands* it. If we believe in Jesus, then we must bear the fruit of God's love to all people, in all places, and every one is included.

Note the many times the words "one another" appear. We are told to:

- let love make us **serve** one another (Gal 5:13);
- **accepte** one another (Rom 15:7);
- help **carry** one another's **burdens** (Gal 6:2);
- show your love by being **tolerant** of one another (Eph 4:2);
- be **kind** and **tender-hearted** toward one another (Eph 4:32);
- **forgive** one another (Eph 4:32);
- **submit yourselves** to one another (Eph 5:21);
- be **humble** towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves (Phil 2:3);
- **look out** for one another's interests (Phil 2:4);
- **encourage** one another (1 Thess 4:18);
- **help** one another everyday (Heb 3:13);
- **do good** to one another and to all people (1 Thess. 5:15);
- be at **peace** with one another (1Thess 5:13);
- **pray** for one another (James 5:16);
- **open your homes** to one another (1 Peter 4:9);
- be eager to **show respect** for one another (Rom 12:10);

When we consider all these ***one another*** statements it's obvious that love is much than a feeling. It is nothing less than acting in one another's highest good, doing whatever is necessary to be helpful and to meet their needs. No room for *Them vs Us, You vs Me, This is Mine.*

Dear members and friends of St. Ansgar's, we are one family, you and I came from one mother and one father. We are cousins.

So, when Jesus says, "*My commandment is love one another...*" He isn't talking about having nice feelings and being nice people. He is talking about rolling up our sleeves and often doing things that go against our human nature. He is talking about doing good to one another even though that other person is irritating or we just don't like that person.

It might mean forgiving another person and making peace with them. It means going out of our way to give someone the encouragement he/she needs as they confront some kind of crisis even though we don't know them very well or perhaps don't particularly get on with them very well.

Remember that the kind of love Jesus is talking about is the **agape** type of love – a practical love that is a generous and sacrificial, a love that loves even though the other person can be quite unlovable, a love that contains the idea of self-forgetfulness.

This brings me to the life of Ellen Eriksen who displayed the very theme of the day "Love". Even though *she* will be missed dearly, there is something very appropriate about her departure, even as the author of Ecclesiastes indicated, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die (see Ecclesiastes 3:2).

It is appropriate because...

...she had lived out a full, complete, life. 87 years young.

...she had accepted and known the love of God and of family.

...she was a Christian and she loved God.

Pastor Ngango in Namibia, Africa, whose beloved wife had died. Great numbers came to the funeral, and they wailed in the customary pagan lament of despair, until Pastor Ngango stood up by the casket and said, "*Stop all this yelling and howling.*"

The mourners stood in shocked silence. "*This woman was a child of God. She has gone to her Father. I loved her, but today we are not crying, we are singing.*" With that he started to sing, "*Praise God,*" and the Christians joined him. It was not a song of despair or fear or sadness. It was a praise to God, a song of Christ's victory, a hymn of confidence.

This brings me to my favorite saying: My friends, in reality No one can preach our funeral. We preach our own funeral while we live. "It's, not what you take, when you leave this world behind you (that really counts). It's what you leave behind you when you Go." How are we going to be remembered?

Ellen Eriksen wrote her own story in a very unique way while alive. She was kind hearted and good nature person who devoted her life helping others in a especially way without excepting any thing back. She would visit the shut ins, clean their homes, always with home made buns. She was Jesus to the shut ins.

She baked apple cakes for annual Church Bazaar for over 24 years. During Rosa's time with us she would help out with our monthly Senior Lunch and fellowship. She contributed in a special way for the life and well being of this congregation.

As we celebrate her life this morning, let us give thanks to God for a life well lived, a sister, a friend, a neighbour, Church member because somewhere, somehow Ellen had a positive impact on us. We mourn with you *Irene Jensen* for your loose.

I believe your sister Ellen left a little bit of her in us all. This serve servant is dedicated to her memory as a faithful member of St. Ansgar. "I guess it's, Not what you take, when you leave this world behind you. It's what you leave behind you when you Go." What story are we writing? And how are we going to be remembered?

Well, done Ellen Eriksen left us with the Gift of Love, gratitude and how to be a servant and serve with joy. And now *faith, hope, and love* abide, these three; and the greatest of these is **love**. You have earned your rest, and our final word to you is *Farewel, so long*, and will see you again. God never sees his children die, God simply sees them coming Home. **Kom godt heim, Kirsten og vi elsker dig.**

Jesus goes on and says, "*Love one another, just as I love you*". Now we know what kind of love Jesus has for us. His was a practical love. He saw that we are sinners and that there is nothing we can do stop ourselves from the death and hell we deserve because of our sin.

And so, his love led him to become a tiny baby in Bethlehem. His love caused him to leave the glories of heaven and come to live here amongst sinners, disease, death and horrors of this world.

But more than that - his love led him to the cross. He gave up his own life so that we can be free of our guilt for our sin and gave us forgiveness and the promise of life forever. He generously and sacrificially gave up his own life for our sake.

And Jesus says, *"My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you."* Love is never easy. Love that counts, love that is real, is acted out. Love, does not sit by the wayside, looking at those who suffer or complaining about how bad things are, and making judgements about who or what is to blame.

No - it leads to involvement, to the attempt to heal and help, and wipe away the tears. That's what Jesus did. When he saw the suffering of the world, he descended from his throne in heaven and walked among us.

He came as a servant, a teacher, a healer reconciler and a Saviour. He came to show us what it means to truly love and to help us. After all, we are the hands, feet, eyes, ears, and mouth of God. ***"Jesus became what we are, that He might make us what He is."*** (St. Athanasius of Alexandria, Egypt). Amen.

We should ask God to increase our hope when it is small, awaken it when it is dormant, confirm it when it is wavering, strengthen it when it is weak, and raise it up when it is overthrown. ~ John Calvin*

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