

..... Daily Devotions

February 11-17, 2018

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Sunday, February 11, 2018

Text: John 3:16 (NRSV)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

The week I volunteered to write devotions for Prayfaithfully just happens to include Valentine’s Day, the day that we celebrate love, so I thought I would focus my musings on the theme of love. According to the statistics referenced at christianbiblereference.com, the word “love” appears in the New Revised Standard Version 317 times in the Old Testament and 221 times in the New Testament. That’s 538 times! That’s a lot! The only other words that beat that record are “God” and “Lord.”

As a parent, I have always thought that I would do almost anything to protect my children out of my love for them. My love for them is so great that I would be willing to die for them. Of course, I always hoped and prayed that this would never be put to the test. In this very familiar scripture text from the third chapter of the Gospel of John, we hear just how much God loves us. He loves us so much that he gave his “only Son” to us so that the love of God would be revealed to the world, through Jesus’ words and his deeds and his ultimate sacrifice, death on the cross, so that we “may not perish but may have eternal life.” My goodness, that is the kind of love that goes beyond my comprehension, but for which I am extremely grateful.

Let’s pray: *Gracious and most generous God, thank you for your love, thank you for your grace, thank you for your Son. We are grateful. In Jesus’ name we pray.*



Monday, February 12, 2018

Text: Luke 10:25-28 (NRSV)

“Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’”

In this brief conversation that Jesus has with the lawyer, Jesus, who is very accomplished in the Socratic method of communication, answers a question with a question. And then he condenses the Ten Commandments into two commandments with “love” as the verb in both. Jesus says in Matthew 15:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Jesus is the Messianic fulfillment of the prophecy proclaimed in the Old Testament.

We are called, as followers of Christ, to love God with everything we’ve got, our heart, soul, strength and mind. AND, we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. We can love God and our neighbor because God loved us first. The love of God is revealed through the words and deeds of Jesus Christ.

Let’s pray: *Loving God, we give you thanks for the wisdom revealed through the words of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to love you and each other. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen*



Tuesday, February 13, 2018

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:12-13 (NRSV)

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

Paul speaks to the new church in Corinth about his philosophy on life as a Christian and his understanding of his limited capacity to know the depth of God’s love for him. He is speaking of what it will be like when we are in heaven with God, and how we will truly understand the enormity of God’s love for us.

This text reminds me of the response I often got as a child when I questioned why something had happened or why God would let it happen. My mom would always say, “Well, when you get to heaven, you can ask God all your questions and then you will understand.” In my mother’s statement was evidence of her faith, her belief that there is a God and that we who believe will have eternal life with God in heaven; her hope, a yearning for the time when we will all be together with God in heaven, and love, because love is the greatest gift of all. God’s love is our greatest gift that he shared with us through the life, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Let’s pray: *Dear God, thank you for the wisdom that you so generously share with us through the words of your servant, Paul. Please allow his words to sink deeply into our hearts so that we can understand, if only dimly, the gift of your love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen*



Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Text: 1 John 4:8-12 (NRSV)

“Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

Happy Valentine’s Day! Last Sunday, I got my very first Valentine’s Day card of 2018. I was tickled pink and the gesture warmed my heart. Isn’t that what Valentine’s Day is all about? Scarlett, the four-year old granddaughter of a member of one of the congregations I serve, walked proudly into the sanctuary on Sunday and handed me her card as she strolled by toward her pew. Scarlett attends worship regularly with her grandma and even helps to bring up the communion gifts on occasion. She is delightful! Her grandma explained that they were doing Valentine cards and she asked her who she would like to give cards to, to which Scarlett replied: “The lady in white at the church. I LOVE her.” From the mouth of a sweet, little girl directly to my heart! She even signed her name and drew me a picture on the inside of the card. When Scarlett comes to the communion rail with her grandma, I kneel down and touch Scarlett’s heart and whisper to her just how much God loves her. I am blessed to be able to share God’s love with this beautiful little girl, and I am grateful.

Let’s pray: *God of love, thank you for sharing your love with the world, thank you for your church, where people gather together to worship, to praise you, to pray to you, to come to your table and receive your love and forgiveness. Thank you for the little children who come and feel the presence of your love. Help us to be like the little children, honest, and loving and willing to share your love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen*



Thursday, February 15, 2018

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (NRSV)

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

This scripture text is often chosen as a reading for a wedding ceremony. In truth, I believe that there are very few who begin their married life together with this type of love; rather I believe it is something that we can strive toward in our journey together as a committed couple joined together in marriage. This definition of love, agape, is the perfect love, God's love, and it is this kind of love in which relationships flourish over time. It is when people take seriously their vows that this love grows, where two truly does become one. It is a beautiful thing, this sort of love.

I often see this sort of love in couples who have been married a very, very long time, who have gone through the good times and the bad, who have tended to each other in sickness, who have celebrated all the joys and shared the burden of sorrows, who have matured and endured through the struggles of life together and who have celebrated and cherished the happy times. This is perfect love.

Let's pray: *Compassionate God, thank you for the definition of agape love which you so eloquently define in your living Word. Give us the strength and courage to seek this kind of love in our relationships and the ability to share this kind of love with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen*



Friday, February 16, 2018

Text: Matthew 5:43-48 (NRSV)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

I don't know about you, but I find this particular gospel text hard to swallow and even harder to do! Sure, it's easy to love those who love you, those who think and live the way you do. Love your enemies? Love those who hate you? Love those who hurt you or hurt those you love? That is tough, so what are we to do in order to obey Jesus' command? I think the answer is in the middle of this text.

“Pray.”

I have a sneaking suspicion that the only way that you can sincerely love your enemy is by praying to God to help you to forgive those who have persecuted you. Hate takes a tremendous amount of energy, it sucks the life right out of you, it is miserable. It is darkness. It is hard, it is the opposite of love. Pray to God for the strength to obey Jesus.

Let's pray: *Empowering God, help us to forgive those who have hurt us, help us to turn the other cheek. Give us the strength to move on, to rise above the muck and to learn from these difficult situations in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen*



Saturday, February 17, 2018

Text: Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

The Book of Micah is a prophetic book in the Old Testament and its author is the sixth of the twelve minor prophets. Micah was a prophet from the village of Moresheth in Judah. In his writings, you will find reproach for unjust leaders, defense for the rights of the poor against the rich and powerful and hope for a world at peace.

In June, 1995, author George Grant published a book entitled “The Micah Mandate” in which he gives a balanced answer to the spiritual and political questions of “What does the Lord require of you?” He claims that “justice without mercy, or mercy without justice-or either without spiritual humility-are biblically impossible.” He proclaims that the message of the prophet Micah is a “powerful appeal for Christians to forge the bond between inner principles and outward conduct.”

What a powerful message this “Micah Mandate” has for us today. It is a mantra which we should have imbedded in our hearts so that we can and will do what the Lord requires of us.

Let's pray: *O God of abundant mercy and justice, help us to do what you require of us as your people. Guide our words and deeds so that your will may be done. In Jesus' name we pray.*

