

Devotions – February 1-7, 2015
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Sunday, February 1

Two for One

Text: Matthew 22:37-40

“He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Since Valentine’s Day is coming soon, I thought that perhaps I would focus my devotions for this week on love. The Bible has a great deal to say on this subject, so brew yourself a cup of tea, hot chocolate, or coffee, open your Bible and immerse yourself in the living Word.

When a Pharisee, “an expert in law,” tested Jesus about which commandment is the greatest, Jesus replied with a two-for-the-price-of-one answer. Here begins our devotion on love. Jesus instructs us to first love God, and second, love our neighbors. But, what exactly does that mean? As the week progresses, we will look at what the Bible tells us about love. God’s love for us is revealed to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us what love is and what love is not.

Let us pray: *Gracious and loving God, thank you for revealing to us your love in the Word. Open our hearts to feel and know your love and help us to love our neighbors. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen*



Monday, February 2

God is Love

Text: 1 John 4:7-12, 16-21

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 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.... God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, ‘I love God’, and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.”

This passage was assigned to me by my spiritual director for my devotion during the month of December. As I reflected, I felt blessed and loved by God, and then as I continued to read the passage, I was convicted of being guilty of saying “I love God” and then having some not so kind thoughts and actions toward a neighbor. I wouldn’t go so far as to say I hated someone, but I certainly wasn’t acting in love and then I felt like a hypocrite.

As you know, it’s easy to love those that are just like us, who think the same way and feel the same way we do - you know, the ones who love us. But it isn’t so easy to love those who are mean to us, those who intimidate us, those who are different from us. So, I prayed about it, and I talked to my spiritual director about it, and now I am going to be intentional about what Paul tells the Corinthians. Paul tells them what love is and what love is not. So, now you have a clue for what tomorrow’s devotion is all about. Stay tuned!

Let us pray: God of love, we are able to love because you loved us first. Help us to know deep in our hearts the love you have for your people. You tell us that “there is no fear in love and that perfect love casts out fear.” Help us to perfect our love for you and for our neighbor. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen



Tuesday, February 3

Love is...Love is not

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,^{*} but do not have love, I gain nothing.

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.”

This text is used a lot at weddings because, of course, it talks about love, about what love is and about what love is not. I think it is a very poetic, beautiful reading, and I encourage couples preparing for marriage to take seriously what Paul is telling the Corinthians about love, the “fruit of the spirit.” (Galatians 5:22) He is telling them the “most excellent way” to exercise all their spiritual gifts-in love.

As we strive to live our lives as disciples of Christ, loving God and loving our neighbors, this definition of what love is and what love is not goes a long way in guiding us.

Let us pray: *Gracious and loving God, thank you for teaching us how to love. Help us to love as you love us. Forgive us when we fail and guide us with your Word. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen*



Wednesday, February 4

Love One Another

Text: John 15:9-17

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.’”

Jesus is having a little chat with his disciples about what it means to be a follower of Christ. Growing up, I used to hear adults say “Do as I say, not as I do!” probably when being taught about the right way and the wrong way to live. I can’t remember the particulars, but I am thinking it must have been said in response to my questions about smoking and drinking and staying up late. It always confused me because aren’t adults supposed to be good examples for kids to witness?

Jesus isn’t saying “Do as I say, not as I do.” He says “As the father has loved me, so I have loved you” and “love one another as I have loved you.” Jesus isn’t asking us to do anything that he hasn’t already done for us. In word and deed, Jesus gives us the best example of “perfect love.”

Let us pray: Merciful and generous God, thank you for sharing with us through the words and deeds of your Son, Jesus, exactly what “perfect love” is. Help us to love one another as you have loved us. Thank you for choosing us! In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen



Thursday, February 5

Unity Amongst Diversity-In Love

Text: Ephesians 4:1-6

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

As we begin a new year and hold our annual meetings and discern where God is calling us to be God’s hands in God’s mission, Paul’s words of wisdom to the new church in Ephesus remind us that we are “one body” with “one God.” There can be unity amongst diversity. We have all been called by God and given gifts to serve God’s people in God’s mission. Take some time to discern where God is leading you to be a part of the church, the community and the world. As my spiritual director told me, “Listen to the quiet voice of the Christ child.”

Let us pray: Father of all, 2015 is a new year, a new opportunity, a new beginning for us to be your hands in your mission. Guide us to live in hope and help us to share with the world your Good News. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen



Friday, February 6

And the Greatest of These is Love!

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:12-13

“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. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

Paul continues to talk to the Corinthians about love and the comfort that we have as we live “in the meantime.” We live in the present, confident that although we “see in a mirror, dimly”

today, one day we will “see face to face” our loving God. With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we live in hope and the promise of everlasting life with God.

God is love, revealed to us through the Word, Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God!

Let us pray: God of love, we thank you for your Word, we thank you for your presence with us as we love you and love one another. Grant that we may, with the power of the Holy Spirit, share with others the love that you have so generously shared with us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen



Saturday, February 7

More and More

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

“Finally, brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God (as, in fact, you are doing), you should do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you knows how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrongs or exploits a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do love all the brothers and sisters throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, beloved, to do so more and more, to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we directed you, so that you may behave properly towards outsiders and be dependent on no one.”

I thought this Thessalonians text to be quite appropriate for the conclusion of my week’s devotion on love, primarily because it begins with the word “finally” and, secondly, because it encourages us to live and love as we ought “more and more!”

When I was doing a children’s sermon at Bethany, Perkins, shortly after the New Year began, I talked with the kids about New Year’s resolutions and asked them if they had made any resolutions and asked if they would be willing to share with the congregation what those resolutions were. One brave young lady said: “I made a resolution to be on time more.” I chuckled and said: “You and me both.” I told her that the good thing is that we can continue to try and do our best and that every day presents a new opportunity for us to keep our resolutions,

whatever they may be. In today's text, Paul urges the Thessalonians and us today to love all our brothers and sisters "more and more!"

Let us pray: *Ever-loving God, thank you for Valentine's Day, a day that celebrates love. Help us to love you and our brothers and sisters "more and more" everyday. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen*

