

“See What Love”

26 April 2009, Easter 3B

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I John 3:1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Prayer.

Love.

Love is any number of emotions
That relate to a strong sense of affection or attachment.

At the beginning of life

Each of us experienced our first encounter with love;

A loving mother’s tender care.

Skin to skin contact.

Warmth.

Food.

Even dryness shortly after we cry out in distress.

As we grow

So does our understanding of love.

Agape is a word used in Biblical Greek

That can describe a father’s relationship;

A pure and ideal type of love

That accepts you,

just the way you are,

warts and all!

As we grow

We become aware of the love of even others;

Loyalty to friends, family, and community.

Philia is motivated by practical reasons;

One or both parties benefit from the relationship.

As we mature

The power of *agape* strengthens

With awareness that our parents sustain us.

They work for a reason,

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Not only to employ their God given skills,
 But to also earn a wage that support the family.
 That box of donuts on the kitchen table
 Was paid for by mom or dad working long hours
 at their place of employment.

As we mature
 We also experience an awakening:
 Eros begins to take a place in our consciousness;
 The strong desire or longing of one for another.
 Eros, if unchecked or undisciplined, can make one insane,
 Leading to poor judgment, poor choices, and poor outcomes.
 But, when tempered and controlled,
 It can lead to intimacy, commitment, and passion;
 Sharing a life with a mutual partner and friend,
 Enjoying a satisfaction that only seems to blossom and grow.
 And so it goes.

Some experience a lifetime filled with love.
 Others find love very illusive,
 Almost as if they are on a frantic search,
 Like a gerbil in a wheel,
 Running, but never getting there.
 Some are at peace with an absence of love,
 For others, they may be driven to alternatives:
 Substance abuse, addiction, cheap relationships, or worse.

“See what love the Father has given us,”
 our letter from John begins this morning,
 “that we should be called children of God;
 and that is what we are.”
 As children, we have siblings, each to the other.
 This is why it is appropriate
 For Christians to call one another “brother,” or “sister.”
 It isn’t some hokey, backwater term.
 “Brother,” or “sister” means we share the same parent:
 a God who loves us unconditionally,
 who’s loved us from the beginning,
 and who will love us until the end.
 It implies that we treat one another
 The way we would treat our own flesh and blood:
 What is mine, is yours.
 If you are in need, share from my abundance.
 We don’t exploit each other,
 We don’t hurt one another,
 And, when we fight, we have no choice but to reconcile our differences.
 Because our brother and our sister is also a child of God,
 We treat one another with respect,

With love.
 We are willing to sacrifice
 Our time, our talents, even our life,
 If that is what is required;
 Because
 The way we treat one another
 Is the way we treat our God.
 "Love the Lord your God,"
 is our Divine commission,
 yet, we must never forget it's equal compliment,
 "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Being children of God
 Implies we are in a relationship with our parent.
 Our heavenly parent
 Serves as our guide,
 Our mentor,
 Our friend.
 God doles out punishment, not for punishment sake,
 but for correction
 when we choose to wander or stray.
 God rejoices when we do right;
 Laments when we do wrong;
 And is known to throw a great party when the lost
 Returns to the family table.

God's love for us should be mutual.
 As we grown in Christian maturity,
 We begin to realize the creating, sustaining, eternal
 Intimacy, commitment and passion God has for us.
 That box of donuts on the table didn't magically appear;
 They are the fruit of God's labor,
 God's sweat and toil,
 All for your benefit and mine.
 The soil, the seed, the rain, the sunshine all grew the wheat.
 The talent of farmers planting, nurturing, and harvesting brought it to market.
 The skills of bakers, marketers, retailers, and transporters
 All made it possible to put those donuts on the table.
 What makes love mutual
 Is when we can return the love to God;
 By our faith,
 By our belief,
 By our disciplined practice of worship, prayer, and devotions,
 By our righteous and holy living.

Like every loving parent,
 Our God has given us just enough freedom and responsibility
 For us to test the limits.
 Each of us has exercised our freedom of choice;
 To step beyond the fence of righteous behavior.
 That is a polite way to say,
 Each of us has mucked around in sin.
 Being less than perfect
 Implies we will screw something up.
 Our forefathers sinned,
 Rejecting God's laws and breaking God's covenant.
 And we have sinned,
 We have acted with lawlessness,
 Intentionally or unintentionally
 Causing pain and distress to our heavenly parent.
 But God so loved the people of this world
 That he sent us a Son,
 A brother,
 That the world might be saved through him.
 We've been given Jesus
 As the only solution
 To the complication of our freedom of choice.
 We were given a Savior because God had to give us one,
 We were given a Savior because it was God's will
 To save the world.
 That's what a loving parent does for their children.
 Because we have been given a Savior,
 There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God.
 As far as the east is from the west,
 The north is from the south,
 So great is the love of our Savior,
 Who would die for our behalf,
 Who would be resurrected
 For our benefit.

Finally, I would add,
 something the apostle Paul often references:
 being children,
 makes us also heirs to God's kingdom.
 This does not mean we expect God to die,
 Rather it implies we all share equally
 In God's gracious love.
 There is no partiality,
 No favorites;
 Each of us are equal heirs
 To the manifestation of God's grace,

The unlimited love for his children.
When we consider the limitless nature of God's inheritance,
We know it isn't diluted when others are brought in as equal heirs.
There is enough love to go around.
So it has be entrusted to us by charge and commission
To spread the love of God to all the world,
To follow in the footsteps of Christ's example,
And to be the Divine agents
Who usher in the Kingdom of God.
Frank Mason North,
The great social Gospel visionary of the previous century
Sums up the love of God so completely
in the last verse of our final hymn this morning:
"Till all the world shall learn your love
and follow where your feet have trod,
glorious from your heaven above,
shall come the city of our God!"
Amen.