

Sunday, February 14th, Valentine's Day 2021

"Because God Loves us..."

Today's theme for worship is Love. For God, Valentine's Day is 24/7 365 days a year. God flat out has demonstrated God's love for us every day through life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In the song we sing, "Jesus Loves Me", the chorus goes "Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves Me, Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so."

It is great to know you are loved by God. I did a wedding once for a couple in Oregon. They were huge Star Wars fans and I think their first date was to go to the midnight showing of The Last Jedi. They asked if I could include in my sermon the famous lines from Princess Leia and Han after they kiss in The Empire Strikes Back.

So it's just before Han Solo is frozen alive in carbonite by Darth Vader. Not knowing if he'll survive, he kisses Leia, only to be torn away from her by Stormtroopers. She blurts out "I love you," and as he descends into chamber, Han replies, "I know." It's the last line he speaks in the movie.

This wasn't the original line written in the script, but it stuck. It fit Han's character. And as unsweet as it sounds, there is something about when you say I love you to someone and they say I know. You are showing your love without words.

In Fiddler on the Roof, the Father, Tevya, asks his wife, Golde of 25 years in a song. "Do you love me?" In an arranged marriage this is a legitimate question. Golde dismisses the question at first. And then responds after he keeps asking.

"Do I love you? For twenty-five years I've washed your clothes
Cooked your meals, cleaned your house
Given you children, milked the cow
After twenty-five years, why talk about love right now?"

He keeps asking, "Do you love me?"

Golde sings, “Do I love him?
For twenty-five years I've lived with him
Fought him, starved with him
Twenty-five years my bed is his
If that's not love, what is?”

(Tevye)
Then you love me?

(Golde)
I suppose I do

(Tevye)
And I suppose I love you too

(Both)
It doesn't change a thing

But even so
After twenty-five years
It's nice to know

Do you ever wonder about God's love for you and the world?

In first John chapter 4:7-8 the Bible makes it clear. “God is love.”
“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.”

Ephesians 2:4 “But God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved.”

Roman's 8, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” God sent Jesus out of love even before we got it right. This love is agape, God's unconditional love for us.

What does God's love look like in our lessons chosen for this day?

In Jeremiah 29, God promises to those living in exile a plan to return home. But in the meantime, to a people wondering if God still loved them or was with them, God promises to hear them when they pray. Love in this case is God listening. In our own relationships, when you are genuinely listened to, you feel loved. You aren't interrupted or dismissed or one-upped.

In our second reading from Philippians, God's love can calm our anxieties and worries. Again through prayer, with Thanksgiving, God promises peace to us beyond all human understanding. Like the hymn What a Friend we have in Jesus, "Are you weak and heavy laden cumbered with a load of care. Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer."

1st Timothy: instead of putting our hope in riches, put your hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment.

This is one of my favorite verses, because if there is something you love to do, something that brings you joy, it ties it back to God's provision. So when I am with my family, or playing golf, or ice fishing and I am really enjoying it, it all comes back to God giving us everything for our enjoyment. God truly wants us to have joy.

Gospel, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Consider the birds. They do not store or reap or sow, yet your heavenly father feeds them.

We are to look at the birds as our theologians. God provides for them... sometimes through us and our feeders. The command by Jesus is to seek first the kingdom of God and God's right relationship with us in Jesus, all these things, like food and clothing will be given to us as well.

The gift in this text is God's promise to take care of us today. We have enough worries in the future. And it is good to plan for the future. But here, Jesus is saying we don't have to think too far ahead where we develop unlimited things to worry about in our minds. We are to rejoice in the day. Rejoice in God's provision that day, one meal at a time.

Amen, thanks be to God.

