

SERMON: God Keeps His Promises: To Love Us

Rev. Geoff Ross Sunday, January 24, 2021 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

[“Love”/over-used word:Google:over 1 Trillion hits/request-narrow search parameters! We ‘love’ our jeans/hairdo/cell-phone/jobs/cars/shoes-same breath we love our husbands/wives/children! Poets:“Love”-many-splendor’d thing/complex...songwriters: “love is all there is/all you need is love!”/Today: “Love”/lost its meaning/devalued/downgraded/a commodity-bought/sold;used to sell every/anything. Do we even believe in love anymore?]

This is the problem:our temporal love falls short of what love should be – it’s earthly/mortal; caught in time/space, bound to the surface of our selfishness. Like our flesh, our ‘love’ is like grass is fleeting; here today/gone tomorrow. Love at first sight may be easy, but true love takes time to grow: it takes work/commitment/obligation/obedience – fidelity; not welcomed words in our culture. Love takes sacrifice, and this is why, Jesus, on the night before He was arrested/tried/killed, gathered His disciples to “*show them the full extent of his love.*” (John 13:1 NIV) And He did this in two ways: first by modelling an act of self-sacrifice/service to others as a sign of His/God’s love; then in His “*command*”/“*commandment*” to them/us to “*love one another as I/He loved you/me/us.*”(John 15/reading) By His actions/words Jesus reveals the amazing/wonderful/unmerited nature of God’s love – and God’s promise to love us.

[Love is a very powerful thing/make us do all sorts of things. Huey Lewis:“The power of love!”/“Make beauty out of ugly things”/improve health/transform lives:but can also make it worse. Fallen world/love:selfish/self-serving/gratifying-Greeks called this love “Eros”(root/“erotic”) – more than just a sexual/physical love/driven by desire/lust/self-fulfillment:JO/a “treasure hunt”/wrong love/things/reasons-a trap/love as flawed/fallible/fallen as we are. Doesn’t feed/fill/give us what’s needed – we need a/the love that God has for you/me/us – a love beyond measure/reason/same love that moved God to create us/long to save/redeem us.]

Friends, God did not create us out of need/He created us out of His love. The Bible (Isaiah reading) tells us of God’s love/care/concern/compassion for us – His promise to be-with was rooted in this love/His coming to live as one-of us was an expression/manifestation of that love. While God created us out of love/for love, the full expression/extent of God’s love wasn’t measured by His decision to create us: It was when we disobeyed Him/were sinful/unloving **AND** He chose to still love us! God’s love is undeserved/sacrificial/costly – unreasonable: it’s a love that is willing to die for others/love – a love that transforms/redeems – that “*demonstrates/proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.*”(Rom 5:8)

[Yesterday:Sent HDR a “Care package”/socks/toothbrush/charger/bagels-because we love him. God loved/loves us/wants to be-with us and wants us to be-with Him. Created Universe/world-for us/me/you!Gave us gifts/called you by name/knew you before you were born:loved/loves us/nothing can separate us from God’s love-except us! God’s heart

broke/still for us:promises-to be-with us, but in a “new”/different way. God, in/through Jesus, sent us a “care package” – not because He needed to/He loves us.]

“Agape”(Ancient Greek/ἀγάπη) is a Greco-Christian term referring to this unconditional love, defined as ‘the highest form of love/charity’/‘the love of God for man/man for God.’ “Agape” (not “*philia*,”/‘Philosophy’/‘brotherly love’, or “*philautia*,”/‘love of oneself’) embraces a unconditional love that transcends/persists/never ends/is complete. “Agape” goes beyond personal emotions to seeking the best for others. For Christians/us, “agape” is seen as the love originating/emanating/starting/sent out from God in/through Jesus for/to us/you/me. It is the foundation of God’s/Jesus’ saving plan/purpose/promises toward us. It is the covenant love that God has for/toward us/His creation/children – a love that was embodied in/through Jesus’ birth/coming to be-with us/that was willing to die-for us – a love as Jesus told His friends that “*lays down one’s life for one’s friends.*”(John Reading)

[Learned about love/as a child/now a parent:unconditional/giving.Love is a life-giving act – even if that act ends up in the giver’s death! We are God’s love “Children” – God didn’t have to create us: did it out of love – for love, to show us how live in love/love in return!]

Despite the true nature/full extent/giving ‘cost’ of God’s love, God’s promise to love us – to give, out of love, “*His only Son,/in order that the world/we/us might be saved through him.*”(John 3:16-17) – was fulfilled/kept. Jesus understood this love/He knew what God’s love meant. Knowing that His time was coming to an end Jesus wanted to make God’s purpose clear: God’s love isn’t an accident; it’s an act of God. Jesus' incarnation was the highest demonstration of love. The cross was the culmination of God's intentional and loving plan from the beginning. Jesus was born to fulfill God’s promises to be-with us, to redeem and restore us before God, to save us from ourselves: Jesus was born to die/on the cross in our place. It was not enough for Jesus to just talk about love: Jesus knew what God’s love meant and by being with/dying for us, Jesus showed that God keep His promises to love us – because God is love. Amen.