**Loved By God To Love Others**

**Ephesians 2:1-10**

Trinity XI – 8.23.2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

There was a popular song in the '60s with lyrics saying, "What the world needs now is love sweet love, that's the only thing that there's just too little of." Maybe you remember the song. It even had a catchy little melody – well, it got popular anyway. Some thought it was written in protest to the war in Vietnam, others believed it was in regard to the racial divide in our country at the time. It was part of the movement which had at the core of its thinking peace, love, and harmony.

Today there is as great a need to love one another…in fact, Scripture declares, “If God has loved us, so also ought we to love one another.” (1 John 4:11)

Love is a great word. But love is a confusing thing. What is it? What does it mean? As I have said before, there are different kinds of love. Teenagers fall in love every day, or so they think. In the Greek, this is eros love, a physical attraction.

There is the Greek phileo type love – brotherly love. Phileo love is the kind of love that soldiers or teammates have for one another, a closeness that comes from a shared experience.

Finally, is agape love, an undeserved and unconditional love. It is love given where nothing is expected from the other, in fact the other may not even be deserving of the love given to them. It is a selfless love. This is the love of God. While we were sinners God’s love is shown, giving His only begotten Son to die for us.

It is easy to get confused when thinking about love. As children all we know is the love of a mother and father – this is agape love. As a baby we did not do anything deserving of their love; it was just given to us. Yes, some would say they are so cute, how can you not love them? That is said by those who do not know, or who have forgotten; colicky nights of sleeplessness, really full diapers, projectile vomiting, and being unable to figure out what they want so they will calm down and go to sleep.

As we get older, we grow in love in our friendships with children our age, and of course that love which we give back to parents. These types of friendships with others is the phileo brand of love. Since that boy-girl stuff is a way off, young children don't think of what they feel for others as "love," they're just pals – good friends.

Finally, boys do discover girls and girls discover boys. They think this is love! You get a gnawing feeling in your stomach when you think of them – it must be "true love." Yet, this eros love between boys and girls is often the most shallow. In the early stages that kind of love is not based upon much. Often it is purely based upon who is attractive. This type of love would be better described as lust.

Unfortunately, that lust-based love is what many consider love to be all about. In fact, in some couples, the longer they are together and that physical attraction fails, they claim they have “fallen-out-of” love, the “chemistry” is gone, there is no more “spark.” Usually it means they have found someone else they love – usually someone they find more attractive, they have fallen into “lust” with them!

“Love” is not a sexual thing! True love is much deeper than that. The longer I have been married the deeper my love for Pauline has grown. Yeah it began as a more “shallow” understanding of love, maybe even primarily that eros type of love. Seeing her can still make my heart skip a beat.

It really is too bad that we cannot keep that parental feeling of love for longer. That is the deeper love. A parent's love for a child is an unconditional love. In fact, as a child grows older and gets into more things, that love may be in fact undeserved. Ask my mom if I deserved to be loved. She would probably say that what I deserved was a whooping, but she loved me anyway. We love our children, even during those times we are disappointed in them for their misbehavior.

In our Gospel lesson Jesus tell the parable to those who treated other with contempt, those they thought were better than them – something definitely unloving.

Agape love is spoken of in that verse we all carry deep in our heart, John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

It this undeserved Divine love spoken of in our text from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us.* And it goes on: *even when we were dead in our trespasses.* God loved us even when we deserved a whooping, eternal damnation. Sin has so tainted us we deserve only God's wrath. Even at the same time we deserve His wrath and punishment, He loves us – undeservedly and unconditionally.

Out of His great love for us, God sent His only Son to save us. In His love, He sent His Holy Spirit through the Word to give us faith – to unite us to Christ – we are in Christ. God sees Christ when He looks at us, He no longer see sinners, instead He sees His own Son.

That faith He has given us, clings to Christ as Christ comes to us, and lives in and through us. As the last verse of the text tells us, *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*

You and I still fight against the work of the Holy Spirit in us. He works in us the desire to do good works. But we still like to thing we’re better than other, as if God will look down upon us and smile and say, “I will let you into heaven because of how good you are.”

That is not how it works. You are God's workmanship. You are created in Christ Jesus for good works, and as you heard, they are good works which God prepared beforehand. YOUR good works are things ***God has done*** in you and through you, that you should walk in them – and God is love.

Dearly beloved of God, you have been loved with a boundless and undeserved agape. That is, you have been loved with a boundless and undeserved love. You have been loved in Christ. It is in Christ – in God’s love given to you, that love for others becomes manifest in your lives.

Is God’s love given to you in Christ demonstrated by your love for others?

I may have used this illustration in the past, but it fits.

A traveler's car broke down on an old two-lane backwoods highway. The traveler walked down the road and up the steps of a small, neatly kept farmhouse. A woman answered the door, "Hello, what do you want?" The traveler only answered with the question, "Does God live here?" The woman was startled. She thought she might have misunderstood. Once again she asked; "What is it you want?" The tired-looking traveler's reply was the same; "Does God live here?"

With that, the woman slammed the door shut in the man's face and ran out to the back of the house to see her husband...

...He became incensed when he heard of the stranger's question. “Didn't you tell him we attend church every Sunday?” “That wasn't what he asked John,” she replied; “He asked, ‘Does God live here?’”

“Well, didn’t you tell him that we are heavy contributors to the church, that you are active in the Guild, and that I’ve been an elder for eight years?” “That wasn't what he asked John, he asked, ‘Does God live here?’”

After talking the matter over for some time, they finally came to a conclusion based upon their behavior, it was a rather sad one. They decided that God did not live there!

Are you often in the same boat? Do you look at your activities with the church and think that is the end of your Christianity? You go to church, you are involved in different organizations at church, and you contribute to the church. But is that often where it ends?

Did God only love you a little bit? Did God only show His love for you in the church? Or does God love you in every aspect of your life?

You have been given the love of Christ and you are not just to sit on that love. If it is not flowing out from you, it is not really love. There’s a saying, “You haven't really experienced love until you give it away.”

Do you love others as God would have you love them? Do you unconditionally give of yourselves to others as Christ gave to you? You have been united to Christ. Christ in you lives in you to love others – your capacity to love others is by what Christ supplies – could you ever run out? Or are there times you fight against the Holy Spirit’s work in you to love in all that you do.

You have been loved by God to love others. You express this love in your actions, your reaching out and helping those around you. You reach out and comfort others in their time of need and rejoice in their time of happiness. In Christ’s church you have numerous opportunities to reach out in love to those in your Christian family. As Christ fills you, you also see the needs of those around you, those with whom you have contact every day.

Sadly, God’s love is not always clearly shown in us, much to our shame. I have not loved God with my whole heart. I have not loved my neighbor as myself. Neither have you, have you?

Love’s definition is: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

God’s love for you came down with flesh on. God’s love screams at you from the cross: “you are forgiven.” From heaven, God instructs you, “See my love dripping down from the cross? That is your forgiveness!” Today, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

God’s love comes to you in the forgiveness you eat and drink. In this wonderful meal, God raises us up with Christ and seats us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. We are lifted up to the heavenly banquet feast as we eat and drink. Why does God do this? Because of His great love for us, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Yes, God’s love comes to you in the peace He gives that passes all understanding. You have been loved by God, for eternity.  Amen.