

May 2, 2021 Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

A few years ago, my wife and I purchased a Roomba based upon the recommendations of a few people we knew who talked about how much they enjoyed theirs. If you've never seen or heard of these things before, they're basically little robots that vacuum your home for you. All you have to do is click a button and then they turn on and go from room to room vacuuming. Of course, it doesn't do quite as nice of a job as a normal vacuum cleaner, but it is really nice to just turn on and let it do some light cleaning and it's also convenient for getting into some of those hard-to-reach areas like underneath tables and chairs. Well, if you haven't gathered it yet from how highly I'm talking about this machine, my wife and I are really enjoying our Roomba since it's made cleaning the house a bit easier. One time we were discussing how much we enjoyed it, and I said something like, "I really love Roomba", and that caused me to actually pause for a moment. Because I realized that I just used the word "love", one of the most powerful words in the English language, to describe a household appliance. I then reflected more about how casually the word love gets thrown around today; how people say that they love different foods, or modern conveniences, or material possessions. Admittedly, I'm also quite fond of many of those things and there's nothing wrong with them in of themselves. But when people talk about loving these kinds of things, they seem to be describing enjoyment more than actual love.

Our first reading this morning from 1 John centers around actual love, the passage declares that God is love and that when we love, we know God. Love for 1 John's author isn't so much about enjoyment, rather it's a giving, relational kind of love. Think of love from parents who offer so much to raise, nurture, and provide for their children throughout their lives. Think of love from spouses who mutually support one another and make sacrifices for each other without a second's thought. Think of love from friends who will always be there for each other no matter what. Think of the love that went into making so many of these quilts you see around the sanctuary this morning that people so caringly stitched to help so many of our neighbors. That's the kind of love that 1 John is talking about, love that's free of selfishness. Now don't mishear me, I'm not talking about self-care or self-worth, those things are actually an important part of a true loving relationship. Selfishness though is antithetical to the relational, giving kind of love. Selfishness turns completely inward and ignores the rest of God's creation and essentially makes it impossible for someone to love or be even loved those around them. There's a lot of forces encouraging selfishness in this world today and that's why love is so important. God created us to both offer and also to receive this giving, relational type of love. Never doubt the power that it has, for we've seen Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Jesus, and so many others change the world for the better with that kind of love.

Bishop Michael Curry offered a sermon about that very subject a few years ago at the royal wedding for Meghan Markle and Prince Harry, which some of you might have watched or seen clips from. Bishop Curry has shared how since giving that sermon, that he's had many people come up to him whenever he's out and about. One of the most powerful of those encounters was when a soldier dressed in full uniform came up to him while he was walking through an airport and said, "I want to thank you because when you had the whole world's attention at that wedding, you took the opportunity to preach about love. If more people loved like that then maybe I wouldn't have to watch so many people get buried around this world".

To our graduates with us this morning, congratulations on making it to this important milestone! I'm sure that in the coming weeks, you're going hear a lot of speeches from your

teachers, school administrators, coaches, and mentors giving you good life advice. I don't want to overwhelm you and add too much to that nor do I really have much advice to offer in the first place. All I'll say to you is that whatever may lie ahead for you in this life, don't give into the temptations of selfishness, share love with God's creation and let yourselves be loved by others throughout God's creation. Even though we all follow different career and life paths from one another, no matter what life may have in store for us love will always be a vital part of living a fulfilling life, because God created us to love. So, friends, together let us live the way we were made to live and transform the world by giving and by receiving love. For as the words of 1 John declare, "The commandment we have from God is this; those who love God must also love their brothers and sisters." So now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, amen.