

Trinity II

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Date: 26 June 2022

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[0 : 00] The lingo of love is all around us. We read signs that say love is love.

But such a phrase is like saying cake is cake or car is car. There's absolutely no explanation or definition of what love really is.

In a culture that says everything is subjective, merely personal experience, such lingo of love is void of any meaning.

It is absolutely arbitrary and eventually it becomes cruelty. Because love becomes the manipulation for whatever I desire rather than something outside of the self.

Love is purely subjective, therefore it's not love and it has no basis in anything objective. So let's get the more accurate way of discussing love.

[1 : 08] What is love? Where does love originate? Where does it come from? Who determines what love really is?

Let me state at the outset the very premise of this sermon. And here it is. Love comes from God because God is love.

Therefore, love is the action of God seen in his sacrifice on the cross for us. And then love is our response to that sacrifice in obedience.

Giving of ourselves for the sake of others. If that premise is true, which is the definition from the Christian faith throughout history, then love originates in God.

Love is love. And it is extended to us by God. And this extension of love by God to us is what we call grace.

[2 : 21] Therefore, grace is a gift. It's an action on the part of God. If you're from the Eastern Orthodox perspective, they speak of the energies from God that comes to us.

Same thing. We call it grace. Grace is given to us by the Holy Spirit through the sacraments that connects us and brings us into the very love of God.

To participate in that love. Being incorporated by God into the family of love.

That is, sharing in this triune love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Participating in this love.

We then are called to extend this love to others.

Imitating our gracious and loving God by sacrificing our desires for the glory of God and for the good of our neighbor.

[3 : 29] And this is what 1 John 3 is all about this morning. God has set his own love on us. It's an act of grace.

Of kindness. Of mercy. God has set his own love on us. And we see this ultimately in the action of the cross. In 1 John 3, verse 16, we read, we heard.

By this, we know love. Because he, that is Jesus, laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

That's love. Love is considering the good of others first. Very foreign in our culture. Love is considering the good of others first before we think about our own self-interest.

Love is not determined by our own desires or wants. Nor is it determined by our own definition.

Love is love. Love is not defined by the democracy of a country or culture.

[4 : 47] Love is the act of God. It is the act of God giving of himself to us so that we can give of ourselves for others.

It's always focused outward. And we do this because the people we are called to sacrifice and love are the ones made in God's own image.

Love is the opposite of selfishness. It's the opposite of self-preservation. Because such self-preservation is the hubris that separates us from God and from others.

As a side note, this is why the political tirades from both extremes, hear me clearly, from both extremes of this country is very dangerous and will continue to probably escalate in further violence. Why? Because it's all about power. It's all about self. It's about domain. It's not about sacrifice. And that's true of the far right and the far left.

[6 : 02] Our culture does not look kindly upon those who begin with God as the source and the definition of love.

As a matter of fact, that's why our epistle text says some pretty blunt words this morning. And we heard St. John say, Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

Such hatred is ultimately directed towards God. Because he has set the boundaries for what love is and how that love is to be demonstrated and shown to others.

The cross is the opposite of selfishness. And as we bow our will and our prerogative to God and to his will, we will be accused of not being loving people.

Because we refuse to go along with the masses. We refuse to bow to the definition of love that comes from selfishness and from pride.

[7 : 14] Love is not catering to self. Love is not selfish. We read that in the great love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13. Love is not what we define it to be because God is love.

And anything that contradicts his word and contradicts his will is the opposite of true love. It is selfish. And it becomes manipulation.

It might use the language of love, but divorce from the very essence and being of God. It is nothing more than sophistry and empty sentimentalism. And that's why we go on to read the conclusion of our epistle text this morning, the following words.

Now he who keeps God's commandments abides in God and God in him. And by this, we know that he abides in us by the spirit whom he has given us.

Love is directed by God towards God for the ultimate purpose of fellowship, union, and communion.

[8 : 28] And this communion is then extended to others. And that forms the basis of unity. We hear all the time about being unified.

The only true unity comes from being connected to God and one another in God. God's desire is that all might come into a relationship of love defined by the sacrifice of self for the sake of others. I know I sound like a broken record. But it's so important. Such a starting point revolutionizes marriages.

Where self takes a back seat to our spouse. And that's not just for women. That's as much for husbands as it is for wives.

It transforms child and parental relationships because it seeks the good of the other. It transforms workplaces where the goal is the joy of working together as one.

[9 : 42] Rather than making our co-workers look bad for the promotion of self. It transforms societies because it is driven by submitting ourselves to the work of the creator.

Rather than rebelling and seeking one's own chosen identity or agenda. It transforms churches. As people seek to serve and give for the sake of eternity.

Rather than for the temporal pleasures of this life. That end ultimately in disappointment and depression. Friends, love is not love.

Just like faith is not faith. We don't believe in fideism. That's a pagan concept. Love comes from God and is extended to others.

As we live a life of sacrifice and obedient to the commands of our creator. Love is shown in how we use our bodies.

[10 : 47] For the glory of God and in service to others. Rather than for mere selfish gratification or advantage. And these commands are not to suppress or oppress anyone.

Our heavenly father is not a killjoy. Just trying to make us all miserable. No, they are given so that we might experience the true joy of communion with God.

And all of his creation. I know this is not a popular message today, quite frankly. It shouldn't be.

But it's what's desperately needed in a culture where words and beliefs no longer have any meaning. We are living in a world that is deconstructing and mutilating itself into utter oblivion.

But the good news. The best news. Is that you and I have been given. Profound love.

[11 : 59] And God offers that to everyone. We live in this love. We share in this love. And we conform ourselves more and more to Christ.

Going by his example. Sacrificing our ego for the good of ultimately God. And the glory of God.

But for the good of our neighbor. And we do this. To a world that is really starving. I really believe starving for authentic and real love.

God calls us. To true love. And even when we're at the end of our rope.

And many of us feel that way oftentimes. God calls us. God calls us. To a life of surrender and sacrifice. And to share in a love that will sustain us.

[13 : 04] Even through the dark times. And will satisfy for all eternity. In the words of our collect this morning. May our prayer be.

Lord make us. To have a perpetual fear and love. Of thy holy name. Through Jesus Christ. Our Lord. In the name of the Father.

And of the Son. And of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.