

Love
FAIRVIEW TEXAS CHURCH OF GOD
February 13, 2010

Tomorrow is the day many say Happy Valentine's Day!!!

OK, today's study isn't really about Valentine's Day. But a little history is a good start.

The day was originally a pagan fertility festival that was renamed after two Early Christian martyrs named Valentine. The day became associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer in the High Middle Ages. The U.S. Greeting Card Association estimates that approximately one billion valentines are sent each year worldwide. Until 1969, the Catholic Church formally recognized eleven Valentine's Days.

Not all "special observation days" are bad, but it has always stricken me hard that we set aside a day to call a person your valentine. The same way it hits me about Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Grandparent's Day ad infinitum. We should treat our loved ones in a special way EVERY day. I suspect these "special days" were set up to cover up a deficiency in people's lives.

The Old Testament had a direction that I think makes a lot of sense.

Deuteronomy 24:

- 5 "When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

Think about that for a minute. In a year, the newlyweds have not outside interference. They are free to sleep late, and then go to their favorite Pancake House for breakfast (that sounds familiar). But the Honeymoon lasted for a full year – not just a week or two.

When the "Honeymoon" was over, the husband and wife knew each other well and could adjust. By then, they also may have had a child. Since the extended family lived together in those times, the grandparents would be charged with much of the training and rearing while the parents worked.

As we drifted farther from this type of society, we lost a lot of the family love, respect and closeness.

I think that may be behind much of the development of "special days" to acknowledge love for someone. It is also a major factor that comes out in songs.

In 1965, Jackie Deshannon had a hit song called "What the World Needs Now"

What the world needs now
Is love, sweet love

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That's the only thing that
There's just too little of

This song was later recorded by Dionne Warwick and Wynona Judd and was a hit both times for them, also.

Jackie Deshannon had another hit song later on named "Put a Little Love in Your Heart"

Think of your fellow man
Lend him a helping hand
...
Put a little love in your heart
And the world will be a better place
...

Another song of the same era was a Beatles hit named "All We Need is Love"

Another site caught my eye when I found a sermon posted on the internet. I liked it a lot and wanted to share it with you.

*S*ermon by Pastor Dennis Kuder
Kinsley and Lewis United Methodist Churches in Kansas

All We Need Is Love

May 14, 2006

All you need is love, love. Love is all you need.

It was nearly four decades ago when *The Beatles* wrote that song. Whether they knew it or not, they were borrowing a precept from Scripture when they wrote those words. The Beatles have been accused of a lot of things since they skyrocketed to fame in the early sixties, but I don't recall ever hearing them called theologians. But when they sang, "All you need is love," they were treading in deep theological turf – and they uncovered some eternal words of truth.

On the last night that Jesus spent with his disciples – on the very night Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and condemned, he charged his disciples to "love one another." Gathered around a table in an upstairs room somewhere in Jerusalem, Jesus looked into

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the eyes of his closest friends and said, “*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.*” (we know this was not a “new” commandment, but a new, deeper meaning to an old commandment) Then he set before them an example, “*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*” Later that same night, he would say the measure of his love would be shown in his willingness to die – to die for them. “No one has greater love than this,” he would say, “to lay down one's life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus went on to say that the proof of their allegiance to him would be made known to the world through their commitment to loving one another. “*By this (by your loving devotion to one another) everyone will know that you are my disciples.*” They will know we are Christians by our love. Love is all you need!

Jesus talked a lot about love. More than once he repeated the admonition to love your neighbor as yourself. That was nothing new to his Jewish hearers. (*can you imagine the confusion among the disciples when they first heard him say it was a “new” commandment?*) Caring for your neighbor was well established in their tradition. The phrase “love your neighbor as yourself” dates all the way back to Moses. It's in Leviticus, the third book of the Bible – in chapter 19, verse 18. But Jesus brought a whole new understanding to the word neighbor when he told the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29-37). And Jesus enhanced our awareness of the capacity for parental love in his story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32). Jesus even went so far as to say we should love our enemies (Matthew 5: 44). He said, “Love your enemies (*might be able to do*), do good to those who hate you (*a bit harder to do, but a reasonable expectation*), bless those who curse you (*getting harder*), pray for those who abuse you (*really hard to do!!!*),” (Luke 6: 27). Jesus had some revolutionary things to say about love (*He brought a new, deeper meaning to the words*).

But that night – that night in the upper room – Jesus wasn't talking about neighbors or enemies. He wasn't talking about strangers or casual acquaintances. He wasn't even talking about disobedient children. He was talking to his closest friends – his faithful band of disciples. He was talking to the ones who wanted to follow him, who wanted to be like him. He was talking to the church. And he said we should love one another. Those of us, who claim the name Christian, should prove it in the way we love our brothers and sisters.

Like a mother who pleads with her children to get along, to share their toys, to stop their fighting and bickering and competing for attention, Jesus said, “love one another.” That's his commandment to the church, that's how the world will come to see us as uniquely different. That's how they will know we are Christians. That's what will attract them to our home. People desperately need a place where they can go and be accepted – where they feel wanted and loved. The church ought to be that kind of place – a place known by our love. (*We have heard the stories from our members how, as they travel about and visit other churches, they don't feel the closeness that they feel here*)

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Why is it we have such a problem loving each other? Oh, we usually give lip service to the concept. We say we love everybody. In our denomination, we even claim to be united. But our actions often betray our deeper feelings. In the nearly two thousand years of church history, the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Christ, have had plenty of trouble getting along and loving each other. Time and again, we have disagreed and gone our separate ways. In a world that longs for quick fixes and instant solutions, the church is often little different. Yet, Christ calls us to be different – to show the world a different way – a better way. Jesus challenges us to be known for our loving – to display for the world a glimpse of God’s eternal kingdom.

Christ loved us and refused to reject us, even in the moments of our deepest betrayal. He refused to throw the first stone when others were clamoring for our punishment, intent on having us killed for our sin. *(Jesus said)* I have loved you even as you have debated whether or not to desert me, whether or not to betray me. I have loved you when you were of little faith. I loved you even before you came to faith. Jesus says, "That is the way I love you and I want you to love each other like that."

I hope you noticed that Jesus he did not say, “Live in total agreement.” He knew we could not do that. I suspect he would not have us continually agree even if we could. After all, Jesus deliberately chose disciples who violently disagreed on issues of faith. He chose a zealot and a tax collector – one who radically opposed the Roman government and one who worked for them. He chose an impetuous hard head named Peter and two brothers who were so hot-tempered that they were nicknamed “the sons of thunder.” *(walk thru the several examples of the disciples walking along and voicing their disagreements)*

Disagreements were inevitable, but it was through their disagreements that the disciples grew and discovered new aspects of faith. It was through the disagreements of Peter and Paul and the early church leaders that the church grew in understanding. Theological debates rightly conducted only strengthen our faith and our understanding of faith. And how are they rightly conducted? Under the rule of love. Great families don’t always agree among themselves, but they never fail to love and support one another. That’s the kind of family that Christ calls the church to be – a family known by its love. How can we identify a Christian? Is there a Bible knowledge test that we must all pass before we can get into *(God’s Kingdom)* heaven? Are there certain acts of charity that we must complete to gain acceptance? No, Jesus was quite clear about it. Everyone will know who the disciples of Jesus are because their identity will be revealed in and through their love for each other. Jesus calls us to love each other in the way that he loves us. In order for our faith to be more than “lip-service” we must appropriate the words of Jesus in everything we do. Following Jesus means striving to live like Jesus. It means loving like Jesus. It means walking hand in hand and working side by side. That is how

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we give ultimate praise to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The world will know we are Christians by our love.

Is it easy? No, not at all! In fact, on our own, we are incapable of loving others like Jesus did. But we are not on our own. We have the power of Christ available to us through the Holy Spirit. Loving others like Christ loves us is a gift of grace made available through faith. Jesus would never command us to do something without giving us the power to do it. And that power is available to all who ask, to all who seek, to all who come to the Lord in faith.

Perhaps the Beatles were only partially correct. To be absolutely correct they should have sung: "All you need is the love of God!" For it is that love living in us and loving through us that will change the world!

Love means:

- I want to be with you versus I need you
- I want to be with you – sometimes
- I want to be with you – often
- I want to be with you – all the time

We are born with a desire for eternity. We are told that God is love and that He loves us. We are told to love our neighbor as ourselves. We want to live forever – with God, and Revelation 21 portrays a beautiful existence.

But – remember the other viewpoint?

But, we are also taught that God created us.

- **Genesis 1:27** So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

He knew us before we were born.

- **Jeremiah 1:5** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

He knows our every movement and every thought.

- **Psalms 139**
 - 1 O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
 - 2 You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.
 - 3 You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways.

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- 4 For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
- 5 You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.

Why would He create man? Why would He make us so that He knows us so very well?

God doesn't need us! He doesn't need you! He doesn't need me!

God got along quite nicely, thank you, for eons before He created man!

You may have heard me say this before, but the strong implication that hit me like the proverbial "ton of bricks" – the thing I have never heard and never been told – yes – I want to live forever and be in God's Kingdom. But it never occurred to me that, if God loves me, that means that *He wants to be with me!*

Think about that deeply! God wants to be with you – forever! What a wonderful thought!