



Sunday August 30, 2020  
Romans 12:9-21 / Matthew 16:21-28

Pastor Tony Acompnado

Several years ago, a group of children between 4 – 8 yrs. old were asked to share their thoughts on love. Now, you might be thinking...what could these little kids possibly know about love? Well, listen to what they said:

1. "Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on cologne and they go out and smell each other."
2. "Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs."
3. "Love is when someone hurts you. And you get so mad, but you don't yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings."
4. "Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is okay."
5. "Love is when you hold hands and sit next to each other."
6. "Love is when mommy sees daddy smelly and sweaty and says he's still handsome."
7. "I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones."

We all have a variety of ways that we show love to others, and maybe it's in one of the ways reflected by the little children, or maybe you show love in other ways such as through the words sent in a card, a letter, or even in an email or a text. Maybe your thing is bringing flowers, taking someone dinner, or sending gifts. For some it may come across in doing things like showing up at a funeral, going to marriage counseling, adopting a child, or joining your voice with others at a rally for change. And still for others, it may involve not doing certain things or giving up certain attitudes or behaviors. One thing is for certain, I think we can all agree that there are countless ways of *telling and showing* someone that you love them.

In the reading from the Book of Romans this morning, we hear the apostle Paul using a series of imperatives to name love as a basis of Christian living and encouraging Christians to cultivate love as the moral norm for both social and holy life. So how are we to do this?

Longtime NFL coach, Lovie Smith, once said, "God is the center of my life and this controls all that I do. I hope I don't have to spend my time telling my players I'm a Christian – I hope they just see it in my life every day."

And in an earlier chapter in the Book of Romans we're given both an example and an important reminder, "*But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.*"

My friends if we want to learn how to love other people, then all we need to do is read about in the Bible and follow the life of Christ, because if anyone ever proved their love for others it was Jesus. When Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, he was showing that he loved them. When he fed the multitudes and taught them God's Word he was revealing love to them. When he forgave the woman caught in adultery while others wanted to condemn her, Jesus was proving love. Every time Jesus served, ministered, healed, or preached he was demonstrating love. And of course, we know about his greatest act of love – the cross.



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Jesus said that everything hangs on two commands, “*love God and love your neighbor as yourself.*” And in today’s reading we hear Paul telling us not only should we follow this imperative, but that we are to throw ourselves fully into this calling – to love and serve God and one another. But not out of obligation, guilt, or shame, rather as a grateful response to the grace and love that God has already shown us.

But sometimes, and maybe more often than we want to admit, based on the way that we live our lives, I think we completely miss recognizing and appreciating the full depth of God’s love for us. So, hear this again...God loves us so much that while we were still sinners, he sent Jesus to die for us. This is how God expresses love. By giving everything.

So how are we to respond then? Well what Paul was urging those early Romans and is telling us just the same is to take our lives and our call to ministry seriously. That loving and serving God and one another cannot simply follow our natural tendencies. We’re being called not only to address the cares, concerns, and challenges of people like us or those we already know and love or who already know and love us, or even those we feel comfortable with. We also aren’t being called to limit it to our extended family, to members of our community, or to people who support us or never threaten us. Rather, these verses challenge us to care for all God’s people, regardless of how they fit into our various religious, social, or political preferences.

My friends, a renewal of love and unity is urgently needed in our world today and truthfully, we struggle to live the gospel way. These words by the apostle Paul are encouraging us to live harmoniously with others as a way to cultivate love with and for all people. And this love that we’re called to live out is not an emotional one, but one that comes from the transforming of our hearts and minds. It’s a practical love that’s experienced by both the self and the other – it’s a love lived out in ways that *always* cherishes the other. It’s a love that seeks justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace for all. By the grace of God, may we learn to live and love in such a way. Thanks be to God. Amen.