

Wedding Sunday BLC

August 9, 2009

Hymns:

**JOHN 15:9-17** (slide 1 during text reading)

**JESUS COMMANDS YOU TO LOVE – JOYFULLY!**

**\*Remember God’s Special Love For You.**

**\*Show That Same Love To Others.**

Dear members of Christ’s Bride the Church through faith,

Ed was in trouble. He forgot his wedding anniversary and his wife was really angry. She told him, “Tomorrow morning I expect to find a gift in the driveway that goes from 0 to 100 in less than six seconds AND IT BETTER BE THERE!!” The next morning Ed got up early and left for work. When his wife woke up she looked out the window and sure enough there was a small gift-wrapped box in the middle of the driveway. Confused, she put on her robe and ran out to the driveway, and brought the box back into the house. She opened it and found . . . a brand new bathroom scale which did, as she requested, “Zero to 100 in less than six seconds.” Her husband Ed has been missing since Friday. Please pray for him.

I heard about another husband named Joe who made a similar error. When their lawn mower broke and wouldn’t run, Joe’s wife kept hinting to him that he should get it fixed. But, somehow Joe always had something else to take care of first, the truck, the car, playing golf--always something more important. Finally his wife thought of a clever way to make her point. When Joe arrived home one day, he found her seated in the tall grass, busily snipping away the grass with a tiny pair of sewing scissors. He watched silently for a short time and then went into the house. He was gone only a minute. When he came out again he handed her a toothbrush. He said, “When you finish cutting the grass, could you sweep out the garage too?”

The doctors say Joe will walk again, but he will always have a limp.

The moral to these stories is this: Marriage is a relationship in which one person is always right, and the other is the husband. We laugh to keep from crying. In this fiftieth anniversary year of Brooklyn Lutheran, the most destructive myth in our culture is that love between a man and a woman is something one falls in and out of, and a person doesn’t have much control of it coming or going. Biblical Greek has three different words for love: **Eros, Filio, and Agape**. Eros love is strictly physical. It can be innocent enough as the physical attraction between two single people. God created us hot-wired for eros love. He intended it to be an exciting, intimate sharing between husband and wife. God also gave us a brain and a conscience to set limits surely on its exercise outside of marriage and at times and in ways within marriage. Wrongly used, it differs little from animal sex drive. Leave it to human beings with their reasoning minds to come up with all kinds of sexual perversions apart from and beyond God’s intended expression of love between husband and wife.

Leave it to you and me to misuse eros love. **(slide 2)** We tell and laugh at coarse jokes about sex. We allow the devil to play games with sexual thoughts he places into our heads. We find dissatisfaction with our husband or wife because he or she is not the hunk of burning love we can find on the screen or in a magazine. God sees all we do, say, and even think. Don’t you find it amazing that He still loves us, despite our sexual sins – without regard for all the other commandments?

Filial love takes us in a different direction than sexual love. This is the kind of love that grows out of relationships. Of the three this most closely represents tender affection. Man and woman date and develop a track record of shared experiences. It is true that opposites attract. But the couple must have more in common than contrast if they are to be compatible and even complement one another. Shared Christian faith is the best filial bond yet. Other shared interests must also exist, hopefully a lot more than children they are parenting together. Filial love exists completely apart from sexual considerations. “Filial” means “brotherly.” Filial love is exemplified in two men who are inseparable buddies. In a pair of women who confidently share their deepest secrets. In a congregation of believers, members feel a bond of faith and common mission that holds them closely together in one mind and purpose.

How often haven't you and I betrayed a friend? (slide 3) How often haven't we put ourselves first when someone close to us was in need of a true friend to help get something done or just be by their side in a crisis?! Love is a word that rolls off of our tongues so easily. The world loves the word love, but where does a person plug into a good energy source to love better?

That is found scripturally in the third Greek word for love: agape love. It is word used by the Holy Spirit to describe God's love for you and me. God's love is so unique that it is appropriate that the Holy Spirit use a word for love which among Greek literature is found only in the New Testament! The only light we find on this vocable is in sacred Scripture: ***God so LOVED the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (JOHN 3:16).*** Scripture reveals this love as ***the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect Being towards entirely unworthy objects.*** Those "objects" are you and me! Humans are the creation of God. He made us and this world for us, for the sole purpose of lavishing His love on us, and receiving love in return.

But what does God get in return? Do we fear, love, and trust in Him above all things? No, we can go long periods of time with God squeezed completely out of our lives and minds. We are selfish much of the time. When we aren't in that mode, we are focusing our love on others and other things instead of on God. We don't even love others the way God wants us to. (slide 4) I Corinthians 13 is by far the most popular Epistle reading young couples choose for their wedding ceremony. verses 4 through 8: ***"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."*** It sounds so good – and it is!

But how good does it LOOK when we put ourselves into the picture?! Let's try it. Replace the word "love" in these verses from I Corinthians 13 with your own name. I will join you in this exercise: ***\_\_\_\_\_ is patient, \_\_\_\_\_ is kind. \_\_\_\_\_ does not envy, \_\_\_\_\_ does not boast, \_\_\_\_\_ is not proud . . . ."*** Had enough!? We can stop right there!" If they work on you as on me, those words are not as much flattering, as they are accusing. Those words are false. Your pastor is not patient. Your pastor is not kind. Ask my wife and kids. Pastor can be an out-and-out clod! That's my problem. Is it often your problem too?! Have you not ever had a problem with these verses over the years? They set a standard we can not meet. No one can meet it. No one, that is, .....except Christ!

Does this passage not describe the measureless love of God? Let's insert Christ's name in place of the word love, and see if it rings true: ***Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind. Jesus does not envy, He does not boast, He is not proud. Jesus is not rude, He is not self-seeking, He is not easily angered, He keeps no record of wrongs. Jesus does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Jesus always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Jesus never fails.*** Rather than let this scripture remind us of a love we cannot produce, let it remind us of a love we cannot resist--God's love!

Thus we have the commandment from Jesus, that we are to "love one another." He says to His disciples, ***"This is my command: Love each other."*** But how? How can we be more loving in our marriages, in our families, in our church, or with our friends, with that stranger, with our enemies? We will want to imitate the agape love of God. A young fellow asked his dad, "Did you know that in some parts of Africa a man doesn't even know his wife until he marries her?" To which his dad said, "Why single out Africa?" Sometimes I feel like I still don't know my wife. My wife would honestly have to tell you how she wishes I understood her better after all these years.

But that doesn't mean we can't love. Isaac and Rebekah from our Old Testament lesson this morning knew little more about each other than that they were distant cousins. That didn't mean that they couldn't have a successful marriage. (slide 5) A large part of agape love is accepting the limitations and weaknesses we find later if not sooner in others. Acceptance is a powerful force in human relationships. Your spouse or someone else in your life has annoying quirks that may never disappear. If there is any changing to be done, it may have

to be done by you: your attitude, and your response to those quirks. We may not have a perfect mate or perfect children or perfect parents or perfect friends.

When we feel annoyed, that is the time to remember God's agape love toward us sinners. Fortunately perfection is not required of any of us. God looks at us through the rose colored glasses of His Son, Whom He sent to be our perfection for us. He sent Jesus to the cross where He suffered hell in the place of us with our sins. Jesus paid the price for our lovelessness. A sign on a church bulletin board read like this, "***God can mend a broken heart, if you will give Him all the pieces.***" "***God can also mend a broken marriage . . . if you will give Him all the pieces.***" God can take a shattered marriage and glue it together so perfectly that it will not even show the cracks. He can even make it stronger than it was before. And He can take a good marriage and make it more beautiful every day.

The secret lies in giving it ALL to God. But before we can do that with our marriages, we must do it with ourselves. Perhaps the greatest prayer a wife or husband can pray is: Lord, save this marriage, BEGINNING WITH ME! Or: Lord, change this marriage, BEGINNING WITH ME! **But remember this: the love that we have for one another is but a pale reflection of the love God has for us.** "We love," says John in his epistle, "because He first loved us." We can be sensitive to one another's needs because we know that God is sensitive to our needs. We can accept one another's imperfections because we know that we have been accepted with our imperfections.

The love that God has for us is best summed up by the Greek word 'agape.' Agape is like paying off an infinite debt. An infinite debt, of course, can never be paid off by a finite person. Indeed, since infinity never gets smaller, it can never even be reduced. Hence, as love is an infinite debt, we will never look forward to a time when the debt is paid off and we can begin looking for credit of our own. Love gives, knowing that there will never come a time when it can ask something for itself. That is the kind of love we have received from God, and that is the love that Christ commands us to share with one another. Agape love does not come easy. Love requires sensitivity, acceptance, and above all recognition that the love we share is a love that we have received direct from the heart of God.

***Greater love has no man than this, that He lay down His life for His friends (John 15:13)*** Dear object of God's unfathomable love – Jesus has called you "Friend." Love Him with all your heart, and love the person next to you – beginning with your spouse – as you love yourself. Amen.