

Week Four: March 18, 2020 – March 24, 2020



HIS LOVE

I am learning to love God and love others.

Love may be one of the most overused words in our vocabulary. We love everything from favourite foods to favourite vacation spots. What this sadly reveals is that we have turned love into a personal feeling. A Biblical passage that serves as a good starting place for a true description of love is John 3:16. God's love was expressed by sending his Son. In this present time in our experience we might be able to appreciate all the more the risk of association. While Jesus was not at risk of catching our sinfulness, the gospel record reveals that He fully bore the consequence of it. That is love.

What does love look like in a time of global dis-ease. While it might be most natural for us to visit with someone or take them a meal to demonstrate our love in very practical terms, we must be careful we do not thereby add to their uneasiness, let alone their risk. So, it is not just learning the attitude of loving others, we are needing to rethink what expressions of love look like.

If our challenge is learning to love God and then to love others, we might want to share this order with others as well. We should point people to Jesus in this troubled time. It is easy to strike up a conversation about the present spread of the virus, Covid-19. It is harder to strike up a conversation about the global epidemic of sin which will in fact kill many more people in the long run. Yet, we already have been given the cure.

We love God because he first loved us. Learning to love God is not so much a discovery of information as it is an experiential discovery. The latter sort of discovery is the desired outcome of this week in our Way of Jesus training.



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People are presently at high alert looking for symptoms that would indicate if they have been infected with the Covid-19 virus. The Old Testament reading for today points to a clear symptom that demonstrates if someone is not learning to love God. Jeremiah reported, “my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols.” It can be disconcerting to see where people turn in troubled times. In times like this people frequently start to think about bigger issues and for many that will include blaming God and suggesting that we must look somewhere else for comfort. As Jeremiah reported of his day,

My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me, the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

Learning to love God might mean learning how to speak up and telling people how God’s presence in our lives changes how we face the challenges of the day because He is the spring of living water.

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Jeremiah 2:4-13; John 7:14-31, 37-39

LET’S GET PERSONAL:

What are some experiences through which you have become convinced that God loves you? If those were difficult times, would you say that you were tempted to turn away from the Lord? Why didn’t you? With whom might you share that story?

My Reflections

LISTEN – What did God say to me?

TRUST – What do I have to believe in order to act on this?

OBEY – What are some ways that I should act on this?



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God is love and the fountain of true love. The apostle John said it well, *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.* (1 John 4:7-12)

Learning to love God is not an exercise of ritual piety. It instead arises within the context of a personal relationship with the living God. A love for God results in a desire to know Him more and a growing desire to serve Him. That service becomes an overflow of His love through us.

Read and reflect on the following passages. You can record your reflections on the next page.

1 Samuel 15:10-21

Ephesians 4:25-32

LET'S GET PERSONAL:

In the New Testament reading we find the instruction to forgive one another. Is the Lord telling you to love someone by forgiving them? Do you think they might see the unseen God in you if you do obey the Spirit's promptings?



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There are some Bible passages that are widely known in western culture. One very familiar account is the parable of the Good Samaritan. What might be less familiar is the situation in which Jesus introduced that parable. Jesus was responding to the question of a legal expert who had asked Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus asked him what he has found in the law to answer his own question. He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Luke 10:27)

While we might like to think that we have a ready capacity to love our neighbours we often sidestep the actual opportunity to show that love. We are in the midst of a schedule altering situation at present that might have removed some of the busy-ness that has forestalled getting to know our neighbours. Perhaps this is a time (with reasonable precautions in place) that we can care for our neighbours.

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

1 Samuel 15:22-31; Ephesians 5:1-9

LET'S GET PERSONAL:

How are you doing in the care of your neighbours? Many of us find the part of the parable of the Good Samaritan that is quite challenging is the part of those who were too busy with good things to help. What are some ways that you could show love to your neighbours this week? How does our present circumstance change your opportunity?

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The song of David, Psalm 23, records the confident assertion, “Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.” This declaration followed an itemization of ways that he had experienced God’s blessing. This is a declaration of faith. This is a declaration of trust in the shepherd.

One of the readings for today is Psalm 23. Perhaps we should record some observations at the beginning of the day and again at the end of the day after we have meditated on this throughout the intervening time. At the end of the day we should give some thought to the specific question, “how did I learn to love God today?”

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Psalm 23

John 1:1-9

LET’S GET PERSONAL:

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT YOU HAVE BECOME CONVINCED THAT GOD LOVES YOU? IF THOSE WERE DIFFICULT TIMES, WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU WERE TEMPTED TO TURN AWAY FROM THE LORD? WHERE DO YOU THINK THAT TEMPTATION COMES FROM? WHO ARE OTHERS WITH WHOM YOU CAN SHARE WHAT GOD TAUGHT YOU?

My Reflections

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Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 16:1-13; John 9:1-41; Ephesians 5:8-14

Sermon Notes:

Truth & Love

The general understanding of love in our culture focuses on support and affirmation. This practical definition has been widely accepted because it is true. The problem is that this is not the whole story. Love is also willing to confront when confrontation is needed for the wellbeing of the beloved.

Disciplining your child not to run into the street without looking both ways might stifle their spontaneity, but it is an expression of love. Love confronts the beloved with the truth. Love assists the beloved as they seek to conform to the truth.

Loving God is not merely a private inner experience. Loving God is to be lived as public practice. In the New Testament reading for today we read, “⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” (Ephesians 5:8-10)

There are many social ills that have been around a lot longer than the present viral pandemic. When we expose those social ills, we should probably step in to help counteract them. This is parts of loving others.

The Anchor for this Week

His Love

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt 22:37-40)



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When we consider how unlovable we have been as people who rebelled against a generous creator, we should be reminded that it was God's capacity to love and not our inherent loveableness that initiated his gift of salvation.

Lent is a sobering time as we contemplate the magnitude of our sin against the Creator. Lent is also a time that we should reflect on the love that God has shown us in sending his own Son to take our punishment on Himself.

The cross of Jesus speaks loudly of God's judgment on sin. This is how serious our sin is that it would come to this. The writings of the apostle Paul demonstrate that he carried a profound sense of this from his own personal experience. As he wrote to Timothy, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." (1 Timothy 1:15)

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Isaiah 59:9-19; Acts 9:1-20

LET'S GET PERSONAL:

While there are probably many ways that your own conversion experience was very different from that of the Apostle Paul, there are probably some similarities as well. Think of how your conviction of sin and the lure of forgiveness contributed to saying yes to the gift of salvation that Jesus offered. If you have never come to the point of receiving God's gift of salvation, you can even now say to God, "I am a sinner in need of a Saviour and I accept the one you sent to die in my place."

My Reflections

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In 'the love chapter' of scripture (1 Corinthians 13) the apostle Paul was writing to a church that was so taken with spiritual gifts they had lost sight of being like Jesus. God does gift His church but the loving way of using them is for the benefit of others. The New Testament reading for today brings this together very clearly. As you reflect on this passage today you might want to think about who it brings together the idea of loving God and loving others.

We see a tremendous contrast between the New Testament reading and the Old Testament reading today. The warning we see in the Old Testament reading against idolatry still stands. Learning to love God will include keeping God in His rightful place and allowing nothing, including the gifts that He gives, to be given priority over Him.

Read and reflect on the following passage. You can record your reflections on the next page.

Isaiah 42:14-21

Colossians 1:9-14

LET'S GET PERSONAL:

Have you grown in your love for God this week?

If so, what are some of the ways that you think this to be the case?

If not, what are some of the reasons why you think this is the case?

Have you had opportunity to love others with the love of Jesus?

How do you understand the love of Jesus to be different with love out of your own capacity to love?

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