

## **Love, Loving, Trust**

What a wonderful churchy title eh? I bet that such a title for a reflection or sermon might be considered to be an example of holier than thou ‘Sunday Christians’ or hypocritical Christians by some. But we can never speak of these words enough. Our faith is based on the mystery of divine love and the call to be love; in thought, word and action and to trust in the work of God in our lives. Many of us will have memorized the Ten Commandments in Sunday School and this morning we read about the one that Jesus gave us – to love one another. Both were given to us so that we would have insight into how to be in relationship with God and with those we meet. Both have shown us how we can demonstrate our love for God. The Old Testament told us how to behave and our readings from the New Testament tell us to what and how to ‘BE’, not only behave, in our world. Yes, the New Testament readings add a very important clarification about our relationship with God, the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit; that they are with us each step of the way, that they are within us, at our core (deep in our hearts and our souls) and that we can call on them to support and guide us each step of the way to do what is loving in our world. Most importantly, today’s readings call us to “BE LOVE”, to experience divine love, to live this divine love and to share this divine love.

As we heard this morning, in John, like his disciples, Jesus reminded us that if we love him, we must show it by doing what he's told us to do--love one another. We are told and have Jesus' promise that God provides us with another 'Friend', a comforter, a counsellor, an advocate and companion so that we will always have someone of love with us and **in** us at all times. We are told that this Friend is the Spirit of Truth – the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that in our world many would not accept this friend into their hearts and souls because they would not be able to open up and experience such an amazing and unconditional love. Jesus told his disciples that they already knew this friend and that this friend was already with them and would not only walk alongside them but would be **IN** them soon. He added that they would never be orphaned and that he would return to them as this friend, supporter and comforter and that they would 'come alive with this friend at their core'. This was realized at Pentecost which we will again celebrate in two weeks. Because of Pentecost, we know that this is true for each of us as well. Through his words to the disciples we have Jesus' promise that at the moment that we experience this spirit of truth, we know that we are in God, that we are in Him and that He is in us. In other words – God and the Risen Christ is **in** us as the Spirit!! What a wonderful message. We have God, Jesus

and the Holy Spirit at our core; we are one with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We are divine love! Hallelujah! This would be enough of a message don't you think. However, this story isn't finished yet. The message from Jesus was not done yet. He went on to tell them that those who know his commandment to love one another, must fully experience God's love at their core and keep the commandment of love and to do so with one's whole being. We are thereby called to not only do loving things because it is 'nice and kind' but to 'be love' authentically. Simply believing and experiencing that God and the Risen Christ in us is not enough. We must act out this love authentically and with our whole being through word, thought and deed as we journey through life.

Peter expanded on this theme of being love after he had experienced the Spirit of Love at Pentecost. He tells us that if we do good with heart and soul, we can never be stopped and will never be seen as hypocrites. He tells us that even if we suffer doing so, we are still better off for doing it. Peter reminds us that through thick and thin we must always keep our hearts and souls at attention to God and the Risen Christ. Peter calls us to be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why we are living our lives in love and in loving ways that we do so because it is the will of God and that we are driven to by the love that is ours. Peter warns us to

do so with respect and courtesy. He calls us to keep a clear conscience so that negative words do not stick to us and prevent us from being loving in return. He points out that by doing so others may see that they are not experiencing life as we are and seek the Spirit of truth within themselves He tells us that it is better to suffer for being loving and good than to be unloving and unfaithful to our God. He reminds us that that is exactly what Jesus did, he suffered because of other's sins, he loved us so much that he died for our unrighteousness. He went through it all to bring us to God. He gave his life for everyone who did not believe in his and God's message of love. I don't think that we are being asked to literally give our lives for others as Jesus did but some do as we hear in the news. However, I believe that we are being asked to turn our lives into avenues of love, support, compassion and grace; not to go through the notions as with 'rules' but to do so with our whole being and with integrity and authenticity. We are created in God's image and we must 'be God's image in our world'; be divine love in its fullest sense.

Together, these passages call us to claim this first love, this divine love, the love of God and the Risen Christ as our own, deep down inside, **at our core and as our core** and make it come alive in our broken world. We are called to move from talking about this

perfect love to making it alive in our lives through thoughts, words, actions and ‘being’. It is not always be easy that is for certain – I can attest to that. But each of us must strive to more fully experience this ‘perfect and divine love’ in our hearts and souls and to live it in our daily earthly journeys. We must become part of God’s circle love that includes unconditional acceptance, forgiveness, compassion, honesty, integrity, caring and kindness. We must truly love one another in just the same way as God and the Risen Christ loves us. Yes, it is a huge task but one that we can strive for, one step and one day at a time. It requires us to get involved, to be connected, and to share the difficulties and concerns of others with heart and soul. It requires us to maintain our own balance and seek what lies deep inside, the strength and wisdom to extend sympathy, attention and support to those we meet. It requires that we listen to others with openness and gentle strength, offering loyalty, friendship and understanding. It requires that we assist others to find their strength and allow the love of God, The Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit of Truth to flow through us into the their hearts and souls bringing them warmth and relief . It requires that we love even the unlovable and unloving – it calls us to love our enemies. Yes, it requires that we love God and the Risen Christ enough to trust that we will be given the strength to be this love and to allow divine love to flow in, through and from

us so that we can do what may seem to be the impossible. It requires a whole way of living in loving union with the divine and with others.

When we care for others with the love of God and Jesus, it helps them and it helps us. When we share the gift of love in our world, in the name of God and the Risen Christ, it helps them as they struggle in our broken world and we are transformed and our lives are changed forever. When we care, when we serve, and when we love, our hearts and souls grow to overflowing with love and we experience, just that little bit more, the depth and breadth and scope of God's divine love. By giving we receive! These scriptures and so many others, invite us to **abide in** the divine love that is ours from God, the Risen Christ and Holy Spirit and call us to **be** this love in our world. The commandment of our Lord Jesus to love one another is truly two sides of a single gift. This reminds me of one of my favourite hymns that my mother used to sing to me. You may know it – Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so, little ones to him belong, in his love we shall be strong....Jesus loves me still today, walking with me on my way, wanting as a friend to give, light and love to all who live. Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.

The Commandment of the New Testament to love God and one another must go on and the commandment to love Jesus, the Risen Son and one another must go on and on. The ten commandments of the Old Testament were about behaviours but Jesus' commandment was to allow divine love to be experienced in us and then to flow authentically from us into a broken world – it was a commandment to “BE LOVE” a much more open-ended commandment than those in the Old Testament. By being love, we will experience the gift of being in deeper relationship and connection with the love that is God and the Risen Christ. Will you walk with me, as I walk with you and build the land that God has planned where love shines through? I hope your answer is yes! Remember, the holy spirit of truth is with us forever to teach and remind us of how to be in loving relationship. It is through faith that we see and experience the living love in ourselves and others. This congregation and the church as a whole, is a community of love. By being a community of love, this congregation and those throughout the world are able to demonstrate to the world that God's love is alive and real, – something that could never be accomplished by skilled argumentation. No logic has the persuasive power of an act of kindness and caring. It won't be a huge task for many in this congregation that is for sure. I see people in this congregation reaching out to each other in various

ways. I see people enjoying each other's company. I see people encouraging each other. I see people experiencing pain when one of us is in pain and see how so many rejoice when things go well for another. I see people taking time to help when someone is in need. Yes. I think that we love each other here in community. Let's take this love out into the world. Love in action is the most powerful evangelistic tool that we have as followers of the word. We cannot argue our world into faith, but it may be possible to love the world into faith. Living the commandment to love is the true meaning of discipleship. So I ask you again, will you walk with me, as I walk with you, and build the land that God has planned where love shines through. I hope that your answer is yes. It is God's will. Amen.