

## Sermon – Easter 5 - 2021 – St. James Stratford

May our reflections on scripture this day inspire us to be strong followers of Jesus in both word and action. Amen.

“Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.”

*1 John 4:20-21*

During this pandemic, one of the things I have been spending time meditating on is:

*How are the ways we can love each other; and what are some of the things that get in the way...*

I find that more and more, the over indulgent behaviour and the high expectations we have created are actually becoming stumbling blocks. To me it feels that *the simpler we make our lives the easier it is to focus on loving each other.*

I look around and it seems that in our North American society there is a ridiculous amount of energy being put into accumulating stuff. We are told

by advertisements and marketing and the media that we need to have this or we need to have that. Greed has been nicely repackaged as “you deserve this or you deserve that.”

Day after day, advertisements are flashing in front of your face on your phones and screens... giving you the sense that you deserve this and you deserve that. We're basically being encouraged to buy into the idea that the greedy accumulation of more and more things is okay – in fact it's normal.

But is it? Is it normal? Is it okay?

I hesitate to point this out but the bible is full of stories about civilizations that broke in pieces because they became too greedy and self serving...

Again and again there are prophets that point out that *feeling entitled to this or that is not what builds a decent society.*

You see, one of the things that we in North America have been tricked into believing is that the accumulation of stuff is just a personal issue – that it doesn't have an effect on anyone other than me. – “Yes I might be a little over the top with the things I buy and pay for but it doesn't hurt anyone – right? It doesn't hurt the world – right?”

Well let's see... the clothing you buy at a reasonable price has an impact on the life of people of Pakistan – they are herded into massive sweat shops to make your clothes.

Some of the food we eat is grown using pesticides that kill honey bees. Without bees to pollenate, many crops are in jeopardy... Sometimes so much animal waste is spread onto our fields that it seeps into the water table and produces e-coli in our ground water...

The giant Food businesses force people in Africa to grow single crops for North American consumption but it leaves their local communities with no land to grow their own local produce. Over time they end up being malnourished.

We have now acquired technology that is so powerful that, without thoughtful restraint, forests don't have a chance. Rainforests down in Brazil that create vast amounts of the world's oxygen are being wiped out in order to create pastures for growing greater amounts of cheap meat.

The high-tech industry needs certain key metals like cobalt to make it's amazing high-tech communication

devices and so mining companies move into delicate environments in central America and Africa. They set up mines and extract valuable resources and yet upset the relationships between the local people and their land. Their lives are disrupted and their poverty increases.

These are only 5 small examples of the way that our culture of excessive consumption and convenience is, in very real ways, hurting people around the world... hurting the land, water and air that our brothers and sisters around the world need.

Over the past few years, more and more people are becoming aware that everything on this beautiful planet is interconnected. And what that means is that our actions both large and small really do have consequences. Sure, I'd like to get rid of some weeds – but I'd much rather make sure we have honey bees and all the plants and crops that need them.

Sure, it's convenient to burn gasoline – but I'd much rather use alternatives and cut down on my carbon foot print and ensure a stable climate for my grandchildren. Sure, I use technology in my life – but there is no way that I want people's lives in Africa to suffer because of related mining practices. No way!

How can I say that I love God but engage in behaviour that brings suffering on people both now and in the future?

What I am doing more and more these days is thinking about how my grandparents lived. They lived with far less stuff than we have these days - they lived very happy and satisfying lives with fewer expectations. They lived lives that had a far less negative impact on other people and the beautiful creation that we are a part of.

I believe we are living in a time where we need to talk about and meditate upon these things. We need to become informed and encourage one another to live lives that reflect our love for one another in the choices and decisions we make.

The simpler we make our lives,  
the easier it is to stay focused on loving each other.

“The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.”

*1 John 4:20-21*

Amen.