

Maundy Thursday - March 28, 2024

John 13:1-38

“Love one another”

1. One of the most complex and important human emotions is love.
 - a. As a concept, love carries different weight and meaning depending on which relationship we are talking about.
 - b. When it comes to romantic and intimate love, there is an author who has impacted couples in therapy with his insights about how love is shared and received.
 - i. Dr. Gary Chapman created a concept he called ‘love languages’ which helps individuals in a couple to identify how they each prefer to receive expressions of love, and how their partner or spouse prefers someone express love to them <https://www.familycentre.org/news/post/5-different-ways-to-show-love-and-improve-your-relationship#:~:text=We%20all%20give%20and%20receive.work%20as%20a%20marriage%20counselor>
 - ii. Members of a couple may differ in their preferences for how to share and receive love, which is why talking about it in therapy can be helpful.
 - iii. You may have heard of these. What is your love language? My love language may well be donuts.
 - iv. Here are Chapman’s five love languages: Words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch.
 - v. All are part of normal interactions, and attentiveness to preferences and differences can be impactful for a couple.
2. Jesus embodied different ways to share God’s love throughout his ministry, especially during Holy Week.
 - a. Just on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday alone, we get a glimpse at specific displays of Jesus’ love for his disciples and the community
 - b. I think we could identify some of Jesus’ love languages, how he shared love through: solidarity, compassion, service, courage, and grace.
 - i. Solidarity:
 1. If we think about the full arc of Jesus’ life, starting in that humble manager in Bethlehem, we understand Jesus showed love by getting on our level, from the glory of heaven to the nitty gritty of Earth.
 2. One of the names for Jesus in the Gospels is Emmanuel: God with us
 3. Jesus’ love through solidarity with humans is all about Jesus becoming one of us, showing us that love means being with us, showing up for us.
 4. Jesus is our example of solidarity.
 - ii. Compassion:
 1. This may be one of the most tender love languages of Jesus
 2. He would see a crowd and have compassion for them, and would linger, would heal and teach, and make sure they were fed
 3. Jesus’ love through compassion shows us the way to open our hearts to one another, like Jesus reached all who were being forgotten
 - iii. Service:

1. At the meal we remember this night, Jesus washed the disciples' feet and set the bar for what love through service is all about.
 2. It is a humble, selfless service, focused on upending and flattening hierarchies, bringing all as equals. Jesus shows us the way.
- iv. Courage:
1. I think courage as a love language was something Jesus showed throughout, but these two days highlight it even more
 2. He loved courageously even to the point of risking his life
 3. Jesus would face indescribable injustice and violence, but he did not give up, exposing the brutality and ultimately weakness of those in power.
 4. Jesus is our example of a courageous love that doesn't back down.
- v. Grace:
1. And ultimately Jesus' love is about God's grace.
 2. He welcomed all. He taught in the Sermon on the Mount and lived out every day "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."
 3. From the cross he even forgave his tormentors.
 4. Jesus gives us grace and invites us to live our lives through it.
3. Our call is to live out the love of Jesus to the end, a fully committed love.
- a. Our scripture for tonight included these words: "[Jesus] loved them to the end"
 - i. Professor Veronica Miles writes that we can interpret "to the end" as being about coming to the conclusion, to the end of the road.
 - ii. But she also mentions that the Greek is symbolic too: "Jesus loved them completely, wholeheartedly, irrefutably... the narrator affirms that Jesus' love is sustainable and without limit..."
 - iii. She continues by pointing out that the Greek verb used here for love "agapao," is a high love, one meaning "to prove or exhibit love through action. Jesus proved his love for his own by engaging in concrete practices that transformed their lives and preserved their ... well-being. Through proclamation, teaching, and acts of healing, delivering, saving, welcoming, feeding, interceding, intervening, and advocating, Jesus [showed] his love to the end." <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/maundy-thursday/commentary-on-john-131-17-31b-35-15>
 - b. In our own preference of love language, in our own following of Jesus' love language, tonight reminds us that our call is to live a fully committed love.
 - i. And lest we worry about not having enough love in difficult times, remember only that the love we share isn't our own, but we're channeling God's love
 - ii. So it is God's love that flows through us in our solidarity, compassion, service, courage, and grace, as we follow the example Jesus set for us.
4. Jesus told his disciples and tells us: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."