

Sunday, February 9, 2024

Sermons From the Calendar (3)
(Valentine's Day)
Reflecting on God's Love
Romans 5:8

This coming Friday, according to our calendars, we are reminded that it is “Valentine’s Day”. This is a day where we declare to our spouse or love interest, or family and friends our love for them. Sometimes that love is romantic or based upon a deep relationship and other times it is superficial. We show our affection for them with gifts – flowers, cards, candy, dinner, gifts or some other meaningful gesture letting them know that we are thinking about them and that they have a special place in our lives. According to the Greeting Card Association, 145 million cards are purchased each Valentine’s day (not counting classroom cards). You cannot go into a store without being reminded that it is “just around the corner.”

I. The “holiday”

- a. It is observed each year on February 14th in the United States. It is not recognized as an official holiday.
- b. Origin – the origin of Valentine’s day is uncertain.¹ There were at least 3 different “Saint Valentines” all of whom were martyred. 2 died in the later 3rd century (~270 AD). Legend holds that Emperor Claudius II of Rome outlawed young men marrying because of military conflict. A priest, named Valentine continued to perform marriage for young couples in secret. He was executed when discovered. There was another “Bishop, Valentine of Terini” who was also executed by Claudius II. One of these, while in prison, is said to have written a letter to his jailer’s daughter, a friend, and signed it, “from your Valentine.” This is likely the origin of sending romantic greetings on this day. February 14 was not set aside as the day until the middle ages. Sources attribute this date to the fact that in poetry it was observed that in mid-February when birds joined together and that is how the day became associated with love. According to Catholic.com, “the Church certainly does not teach that Valentine’s Day should be celebrated in connection with romance.”²
- c. Again, as the Lord’s church, we do not celebrate this day. However, because this is a day reminding us of the importance of love, we do find many Biblical lessons (too many for this lesson) that we can consider. As we shall see, love is the foundation of every relationship we are in.

II. Lessons for us to consider

a. God’s love for us

- i. That God loves us is clearly taught throughout scripture. 1 John 4:7-8 tells us that God is love (that is, the full manifestation of what love is).
- ii. Continuing with 1 John 4:9-11, we learn that the greatest demonstration of that love was in sending Jesus to die for us. John 3:16, Romans 5:8 tells us it is how He demonstrates His own love toward us.

¹ History of Valentine’s Day. [Valentine's Day 2024: Origins, Background & Traditions | HISTORY ...](#) History.com 1/29/2025

² [Who was Saint Valentine, and how did his feast day of February 14 come to be regarded as a day for romance? | Catholic Answers Q&A](#)

- iii. Of course, Jesus also demonstrates that love. He came to earth to be the sacrifice we need – Philippians 2:5-8. He did this freely and without reservation – 1 John 3:16, *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* John 15:13, preparing His apostles for His imminent execution He reminded them that the reason he would die is because of His love. He noted that *“greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”* So many passages illustrate this.
- iv. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Romans 8:31-39 – also describes what the love of God and Christ means.

b. Let the Bible define what true love is – 1 Corinthians 13

- i. When we study the love of God and Jesus, we find the ideal model that we ought to strive to imitate. 1 John 4:11 reminds us, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*
- ii. Not only do we have God’s ultimate example, but what that love looks like is described in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a. In context, Paul is describing “a more excellent way” (12:31) than miraculous spiritual gifts. He speaks of the way of love. We could parse this text and every quality, but let’s notice it from a broader perspective.
- iii. It does the right things for the right reasons – vs. 1-3. Paul notes that all the outward acts of piety, if not accompanied by love are meaningless. In fact, to God they are an irritating noise. Cf. 1 Samuel 15:22, *“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”*
- iv. It is demonstrated through various qualities – if we have Christian love we will:
 1. Suffer long – be patient, even in struggles and disappointments.
 2. Be kind – considerate and warmhearted toward others.
 3. NOT envy, parade ourselves or be puffed up. Genuine love is humble.
 4. NOT behave rudely, or respond in kind when we are wronged.
 5. NOT seek our own – we will not be selfish or self-serving in our goals and pursuits.
 6. NOT be provoked – we will demonstrate control over our emotions and responses.
 7. NOT think evil – it should never be our desire to bring harm to others (this is NOT the same as punishment).
 8. NOT rejoice in iniquity, but in truth. We do not approve of sinful conduct OR those engaged in such. We love the truth and that is our standard.
 9. Bear all, believe all, hope all and endure all things – as much as possible, we ought to give the benefit of the doubt to one who is seeking to do right, or seeking reconciliation.
- v. It never fails – it stands the test of time. It is there over and over. Love needs to be our default disposition, especially when we are wronged.
- vi. God’s love is the perfect manifestation of this description.
- vii. It is also descriptive of EVERY relationship we are in – our brethren, neighbors, acquaintances, God & Jesus & His Spirit. Even our enemies ought to be loved – Matthew 5:43-46.

c. How do we manifest our love for others?

- i. FIRST this is a “how to” question. As a “how to” question, consider the previous point as a starting point. Are we developing the qualities Paul used to describe this love?
 1. 1 John 4:19 – we love Him because He first loved us. The foundation of our love toward others is our love toward God. In everything we do, it is to bring glory to Him.
 2. We love by praying for others, even our enemies – Matthew 5:43-44.
 3. We love by bearing with them – Colossians 3:12-13
 4. We love others by forgiving them –
 - a. Jesus was clear we must forgive – Matthew 6:14-15, Mark 11:25, Matthew 18:21-35 – the parable of the unforgiving servant.
 - b. He demonstrated this love while being crucified – Luke 23:34.
 - c. James 2:13 warns us that judgment is without mercy to the one who shows no mercy.
 - d. 1 John 4:20-21 – if you profess to love God and hate your brother... Hatred is a prime motive in our unwillingness to forgive.
 - e. 1 Peter 4:8, *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”* One of the ways we “cover sins” is by forgiving them and burying them. Recall how love “bears all things...endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:7).
 5. We love by our actions – 1 John 3:17-18. When we can help others, even our non-friends, we are demonstrating love. Romans 12:17-21 – help him and let God deal with the vengeance.
 6. We love by not giving up – Galatians 6:9-10
 7. Colossians 3:14, *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*
 8. The Bible has so much to say about how we love each other.
- ii. BUT more importantly, it is a question of examination. I need to ask myself, is my love for others what God wants it to be? How do I consider my brethren in these matters? How do I treat my neighbor and acquaintances? How DO I respond when I am offended (both in word and action) by others? CAN I DO BETTER?
- iii. **Consider these things as we think of our relationships, especially in our marriages.** We have come to associate valentine’s day with showing love for our spouse or love interest. And while on that day, we might shower them with gifts of various sorts, perhaps a greater gift would be to examine our love for our spouse in light of what we have discussed. Working to develop the qualities of love in our marriage is by far a greater gift than any material possessions or gestures we might offer (but those gestures certainly do not hurt). Consider also Ephesians 5:22-33.
- iv. Finally: Do not limit your love or show your love to others a few days a year. We have been reminded that love is at the foundation of every relationship we are in. This is not something we turn on and off. It should ALWAYS be there.

And thus, we are briefly reminded of what the Bible has to say about love. This is definitely a good time to pause and see if we love others as we ought. And it is a good time to show gestures to those closest to us. But never forget that love is not merely a feeling or word. Instead, it is a commitment, action and a reflection of God’s very nature. Let us resolve to put our love into action, even as God did so for us.