

***Pass It On:
Loved, And Loving***

**Luke 7:36-50
1 John 4:7-21**

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God wants you.

God wants me.

...to finish up a task that he started but left undone.

If we don't do it, no one will!

How's that for a heavy?

The Creator has a job that **WE** need to complete for him.

That no one else can do.

Follow along as we hear it described.

BIBLE READING: 1 John 4:7-21, p.241 (NT)

Doesn't take a Harvard PhD to figure out the basic challenge.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Acknowledging that, what then is God's undone project that so urgently requires our participation?

Check verse 12:

No one has ever seen God;

If we love one another, God lives in us

AND.... (ready? 'Cause here it comes.....)

His love is perfected in us.

When we pass along the love of God to someone else, we **fulfill** that love.

Can you believe that?

When we **don't** pass along God's love, it is left dangling, an incomplete project.

Can you believe that?

The Love of God that compelled the Saviour to come to earth

is in some way incomplete if we don't love one another.

Can you believe that?

Some time ago, a woman was struggling with a really hard chapter in her life.

Along the way someone paid her a visit.

Between sobs she shared about her struggle.

And the visitor tried to remind her that God was always there - and loved her.

Sniffling, the struggling person said, "*yes, but sometimes I need a hug with arms.*"

God's hug of love to people in need comes through the arms of people like us.

You may well have already figured out that the Bible **isn't** telling us that we need to be polite to each other.

And it **isn't** talking about being socially friendly over a cup of coffee after church.

And it **doesn't** compel us to like each other.

Being polite, and socially friendly, and liking others are all great things.

But they're not what we are called to be about in filling up God's unfulfilled task.

Love one another....

So - what does that mean?

We hear that word all the time:

He loves chocolate.

She loves the beach.

They made love.

God is love.

None of those sentences mean the same thing.

So - what are we being asked to do?

Enter - a Greek language lesson.

There are three main words in Greek for love.

The first is *PHILIA* - The love between friends, between brothers and sisters.

It's the socially caring sort of love.

The second is *EROS* - romantic love, sexual love, husband & wife kind of love.

Both of these words have in them an idea of **give** and **take**.

Your needs and desires are met just as you are meeting and gratifying the desires of another.

Both *PHILIA* and *EROS* are good and right and created by God.

BUT **neither** of these is the word used here in 1 John 4.

The word here is one that is concerned with **give**....

....and **NO take**.

It is concerned with the needs and desires of the other.... and **not** my own.

Regardless of how deserving the other person is, it desires to lift up the other person.....

without worrying about how much that may drag me down.

It is a love that is rooted in sacrifice.

It is love given with an open hand;

It is love that doesn't keep score.

We call this - "**agape**".

If you want to see the ultimate of agape look to the cross.

How much could we offer Christ?

How deserving were we?

What personal benefit did Christ gain by being crucified?

Each one of us here this morning are awesomely privileged in that we receive Christ's agape care and support into our lives as a divine grace gift.

But if it gets left there - tucked away in the privacy of our personal lives - it is a dangling task, an incomplete project.

The Lord Jesus pours his love into our lives

so that we can pour **agape** sacrifice and care into the lives of others.

We are blessed in order to bless.

We receive in order to give.

We are made rich in order to spread the wealth.

not focussed on how much you like or don't like them,

not worrying about what you'll get out of it in return,

not concerned about how deserving they are,

not worried about what it will cost you,

not even first of all concerned with how they'll respond to your love.

Agape love is what Jesus described when He said to a man who had him over for lunch,

"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay

you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12-14).

The banquet Jesus is describing here is a great picture for life.

Do we seek out people who might pay us back?

Do we help only people who are very likely to help us?

Do we befriend folks whose friendship will be to our advantage?

As you leave here and head back out into the streets of Ottawa, remember this -

How you respond to others,

how you sacrifice for your co-worker,

how you give of yourself to your neighbour,

how you support your classmate -

that will influence and colour their understanding of Jesus Christ and what life in Him is all about more than any sermon I can preach; more than all the worship services they can attend. It's more powerful than any evangelism program or bible class.

It's up to you as you complete the work of Jesus.

SO....

There it is.

There's a bible teaching that could lay a heavy burden on us.

It could make life a real challenge to live.

Because loving is hard work.

Being nice, being polite -- that's not hard.

Being friendly is not too hard - at least, not most of the time.

But being loving - that's hard work!

Because it means we have to stop thinking about ourselves.

Do you love the unborn? Could you spare an hour this afternoon?

And our mind begins to whisper about what WE wanted to do for OURSELVES.

Can you block out Sunday evenings for a small group gathering?

And our mind instinctively asks, "But do WE like the topic? Will it fit OUR timetable?"

instead of wondering what a blessing our presence could possibly be to another person who will be there.

Could you take a risk and tell a co-worker about your relationship with Jesus Christ?

Or does the mind say, but what will they think of me?

What kind of thinking affected the sort of food that you put in the bag for the food drive?

Was it, *"I've got lots of this canned good; they can have a bit"*

or

"I hope that they'll enjoy this."

The teaching of 1 John 4 could make life a real challenge.

So, let me conclude by suggesting two ways you can engage an agape lifestyle without it running you into the ground.

1. Remember the motivation - You love in order to complete the work of Christ in this world. The work of countering the effects of sin, and caring for the ones everyone else ignores, and giving hope to the hopeless - you do that.

And when you get home and find yourself exhausted, remember - you've been doing the work of Jesus Christ.

There is no more satisfying feeling than that!

That alone makes it all worthwhile, doesn't it?

Last Tuesday Sharon and I spent the evening out at the Nepean Sailing Club doing volunteer race official work. It was cold, and raining, and the northwest wind was kicking the waves well up over a metre in height. But because we were out, eight boats were able to finish the last race of the season. Which felt good - at least once we were off the water and back in the clubhouse warming up.

And really, that was a rather trite evening. It was just a sport.

People playing with expensive toys.

Yet - if giving in that context makes us feel good, imagine what it is like to know that we're helping the cause of the Saviour of the Universe!

Do we need any more inspiration than that?

Remember the motivation for making the sacrifices that a lifestyle of love demands.

And

2. Keep yourself fueled up.

Since I started running, I've had to learn a whole bunch about fueling the body in healthy ways. My family is at the point of rolling their eyes when they hear me talk about *Glycemic Index*.

But nutrition is important. Or you won't finish the race. You'll run out of energy and quit. Or cramp up and collapse on the curb.

Got to fuel up.

We've got to fuel up our soul.

Enter Luke 7 - Simon and the woman with no name.

One had become connected with Jesus - and love overflowed from her life.

The other kept at a distance - and he had a stone cold heart.

Jesus' basic message is that you can't love unless you first have received and felt and lived love and forgiveness from him.

You can only pass along what you have first received.

You can't share what you don't have.

Living a love-lifestyle on behalf of the Saviour means staying in touch with the Saviour.

It means being open and receptive to his love in our lives.

It means being aware of his forgiveness and cleansing and acceptance toward us.

Simon the religious leader could say all the right words. He had all the doctrine. He could recite chapter and verse.

But he kept it all at arm's length.

The woman - who knows? Could she even recite the 23rd Psalm?

She probably never went to Sunday School - not with her reputation.

But somehow, in some way that the Bible doesn't describe, she connected with Jesus.

And she KNEW that when he said, "*Your sins are forgiven*" that it was meant for her!!

That when he said, "*Daughter, go in peace*" it was meant for her!!

We're not told how Jesus and the woman first met.

I'm glad about that.

Because it prevents us from coming up with some legalistic code defining HOW a person connects with Christ. It leaves it more open. So.....

It could be through the weekly gathering in worship

It could be through daily private prayer

It could be through the discipline of scripture reading

It could be through a time of meditation in a quiet park

Or something else.

However it occurs, it involves you or me kneeling beside that woman and before the cross and **KNOWING** that this was for **US**.

He gave his all for me.

Don't rush past that, believers!!!

Linger with that thought. Let it soak down deep into your heart.

Remind yourself of it regularly.

Cherish it.

Remember - when others have let you down, Jesus never will.

When others walk right by us, Jesus stops and stays.

When others hold a grudge, Jesus forgives.

When others get distracted, Jesus listens.

And then, remembering it, cherishing it, savoring it, drawing on the strength that provides -
love one another.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.