

Pentecost 7C 2010
Luke 10:25-37
Sermon for Advent LC
July 11th, 2010

Discipleship Week 3: “Loving”

Dear sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

To love or not to love...that is the question. What is love...really? That is the question for us today as we now are in our third week of our discipleship series for the summer. Quick recap of the last two weeks- week one we focused on—trusting...week two we focused on—going. Right...trust in Jesus as our Lord to lead us where we need to GO and that he will be with us along the way and then our willingness to actually be about going. I do hope that you prayed this week about those things- where is God calling you- what is God saying to you- where do you need to go in your life, your faith, your being? Today we dig a bit deeper in our own lives as we exam the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus, in explaining an answer to a lawyer curious as to how he can have what Jesus has to offer uses this poignant story to demonstrate his point. The call of Christ, in our Gospel today and through much of his teaching is that we are to love- to love unconditionally as he loves us- to love others even when we don't maybe like them, to love others with the mindset of Jesus who loves everyone and to love others as we love ourselves. Now...that loving ourselves is also hard sometime...we'll come back to that. So help me define briefly what love is- when you think about the word- what comes to mind? Great...thanks...right on- love is all of those things- and the Bible also defines it in 1st John 3:16 as this, “we know love by this, that he laid his life down for us and we ought to lay our lives down for one another.” Folks, the stakes in following Jesus Christ as our Lord- the stakes in declaring ourselves as his disciples and celebrating Jesus as our Christ means our lives need to be different than if we didn't. God calls you to trust, calls you to Go- and in your going now calls you to love. So what does it look like?

It's the season of weddings- I have been blessed to preside at three so far this summer and have a couple more to come. It is always so exciting to meet with couples as they plan this day and to pry them a bit about why they really love the other and what that love really looks like. And after we get through the Hallmark focused responses usually what I hear is a description of what love looks like not just feels like. Love for many is how they are treated, how they are lifted up when they are down and celebrated when they are high. True love to most of these in-love couples is about the feeling of knowing that their partner will serve them and serve with them. I don't think they are that far off then when we look at this idea of love from a discipleship kind of mode especially when we examine the Gospel for today. In our Gospel we have the question of all questions asked by the lawyer- what do I have to do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus in all his wisdom put it clearly in front of the man by asking him to define the law about following God; “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; AND your neighbor as yourself” he says only to be given the charge go and do this by Jesus. But the man, unsatisfied wants out- so he challenges Christ by asking who his neighbor truly is only to be hit once again smack in the middle of the face with the Christ answer of everyone is your neighbor- Jesus demonstrates this by the story of the Good Samaritan- showing once again the importance of loving all- even the ones that don't look like us, don't act us, don't even reside in the same zip code of belief as us- everyone- and Jesus ends this lesson with the charge- Go and do likewise. Oh boy! Oh Boy. Love...everyone...really?

That is the call- to be a disciple of Christ means to become Christ as we interact with our world and the people in it. Is it easy- heck no- it's about changing our identity completely- to become one who lives for the other- to become one who lives to love everyone with the same love we have from Christ. Now...a couple of things quickly- notice the part of the law that is quoted- love your neighbor as yourself- see friends you have to love yourself- know this- God loves you--so much, unconditionally- he sent Jesus for you- no questions asked- you belong to God- you might not always like yourself but you have to find

that love for yourself deep within. And then, that love transcends the way you love the world. Also- notice the man wants to know about eternal life only to be given a call for today- in that we can see that eternal life, heaven, paradise, the kingdom of God is present when we act as Christ commands- yes when we love as Christ loves, when we serve as Christ serves, when we go the extra mile even if it is painful to be Christ to our neighbor who is everyone- the Kingdom of God breaks into the Kingdom of our world today. So your charge, to love the Lord your God with all that you are- every part of you and to take that love to the streets means you are part of God's kingdom now- you are the disciples, you are the ones God has sent, you are the bearers of God's image. So love the Lord your God- love the creation God made- everyone- starting with yourself and continuing to everyone. To love or not to love, that is the question- and the answer most certainly is yes.

In closing I want to invite you to think about this quote by Martin Luther- in talking about the freedom of the Christian- that we are free from the powers of sin and death thanks be to God we have a responsibility to be slave to our neighbor. He writes, "As our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbor through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians." Dear friends, you are loved by a great God who challenges you to extend that love to the world- and in essence to become little Christs to one another and that calling most certainly does not end with the people you like, the people you agree with, the people that you can handle being next to- no that call supersedes all of that- you are called to love...your God, and all people in a way that transcends reality and changes the present. So be bold, dear friends in who you are- children of God, loved by God and sent into the world to love as God loves you. Go, as beloved children to love God's children. Amen.