

Saturday's 'message' at the Comforts of Home Ministry

Written by Joel Larkin

Saturday, 14 February 2009 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 16 February 2009 10:40

I volunteered many moons ago to give a 'talk' at the Comforts of Home assisted care facility. Our church does a service there on Saturday Morning 10:00 AM twice a month. Since it was Valentine's day I gave a talk about love. Attached is the very brief talk I gave.

Today is Valentine's Day. This is a day where we get to tell our special someone's how we feel about them. I was never really sure if this day was some wild conspiracy by hallmark to sell more cards or if there was a deeper meaning to it so I did a little research. I got this story off the Internet so we all know it's true.

There was a priest by the name of Valentine (the good guy) who lived in Rome in it's hayday (like 1700 years ago). At that time Rome was ruled by an emperor by the name of Claudius (the bad guy). Claudius wanted a big army and he thought people should volunteer to join it. Now a lot of men just didn't want to fight in wars because it would mean leaving their wives, girlfriends, or family behind. This made Emperor Claudius very mad so he did something really crazy. Since men wouldn't volunteer because of their wives he thought that if they were not married they would join the army so he passed a law prohibiting new marriages.

Now many people thought this law was completely preposterous including our good guy. Valentine's favorite job as a priest was marrying young people and he felt this law was wrong so he continued performing marriage ceremonies - in secret. He would whisper the words of the ceremony while listening for the soldiers outside. One night the soldiers came and caught him, threw him in jail, and he was sentenced to death.

During his time in Jail Valentine tried to stay cheerful. Many young people came to the jail to visit him and threw flowers and notes up to his window. They wanted him to know that they too believed in Love. One of these young people was the daughter of a prison guard . Her father allowed her to visit him in his cell and they often sat and talked for hours. On the day he was about to die he left her a note thanking her for her friendship and loyalty signed it Love from your Valentine.

That note started the custom of exchanging love notes on Valentine's day. Now every year on this day people remember. Most importantly they think about love and friendship. And if they think about Emperor Claudius they remember how he tried to stand in the way of Love and they laugh because they know that love can't be beaten.

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You know love is very important. We often look for love in the wrong places, horizontally at our friends or situations rather than vertically. I see people filling their emptiness with love and it's the type of love that will not sustain.

The greek language has five words for love. Eros is a sensual love between sexes. Phileo is a general kind of love used to describe friendship. We think of Phileo love being brotherly love. Storge love is love within a family. Agape love is a bit different. It means to be totally given over to someone or something. Agape love is lavished on others without any thought of whether they deserve or are worthy of the love. It is a totally unconditional love. It is an "in-spite-of" love, a commitment and not a feeling. This is the kind of love that is from God.

The bible talks a lot about love. It says in 1 John 3:18 , (Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.). Our love must be true love and we should show that love by what we do. St. Valentine backed up his belief with action. He continued to perform marriage ceremonies even though he could die for doing it.

God showed his love for us before we were even born ("For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life John 3:16 (NIV)). He sent his only son to be tortured to death for our sins so that each of us could live in heaven with him for eternity. Let's think about this for a second, we sinned against God yet he loved us enough to make a sacrifice and to send his son to die in our places. How many of us can say the same? Do we love our enemies? Do we love those who sin against us just like we love those closest to us?

Romans 5:8 talks about this differently (But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (NIV)). Our god is the God of Love (1 John 4:8) and he demonstrated that by his actions.

As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to demonstrate this love ("A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35 (NIV)).

This is not an IF kind of love, conditional based upon future expectations. This is not a because kind of love which is based on others current status, it's an "in-spite" kind of love. IN SPITE of your faults, IN SPITE of your appearance, IN SPITE of when you sin against me. It is

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a love that we don't naturally possess but must learn. An enduring love that doesn't keep a score card, that will be there tomorrow regardless of what is done today.