

From The Pastor

People notice and pay attention to love, kindness, and charity. We want to be around people who are free and confident to live this way. We are naturally drawn to such people and are often inspired to imitate them. Unfortunately, many see this as a rare and infrequent experience. I have heard countless times from those who work in negative or even mean work environments day after day, finding it quite unbearable to be patient or even tolerant.

The call of the gospel is to preach and imitate Christ. We are commissioned to 'love one another as I have loved you'. We embrace this desire with hope, yet it seems an impossible task in the face of chronic negativity and constant selfish and self-centered behavior. It is so easy to fall, or even jump into the same flow of complaints, criticism, and negativity that surround us.

In the commandment to love one another, we are not left without sufficient help. To find the courage and the motivation to love as Jesus loved we have to be close to the love of Jesus, conscious and aware that he is always with us. To be a presence of Jesus to others we must pray and be aware of the presence and peace of Jesus in ourselves. Most of us do not always have the strength or desire to be loving and kind just because it is the right thing to do. We are able and willing to do good and loving things for others at times, but our better behavior is often inconsistent or selective. To consistently love as Jesus calls us to love, we have to be close to Jesus through a personal relationship of prayer. In such a relationship we realize it is only with the power of the Lord's love that we can love others, especially in the face of negativity, jealousy, and conflict.

Where is love most deeply rooted in you? Do you find Jesus in that place? What is your earliest experience of loving God? When did you become conscious of loving God, or wanting to know and love God? As you think about these questions, what human experience or images fill your thoughts? You might ponder your first experience of when you realized you were loved. What persons, images, or experience surrounds this awareness?

Learning to love as Jesus loves always begins with the experience of being loved. As we are loved, so we learn to love. Without the experience of being loved by another person in a real and personal way, the commandment to love God and others becomes a principle or ideal to which we strive. God is not a principle, or an ideal. God is the divine person of love, and when we live in love we live in God, and God lives in us.

Love is our identifying source and origin. We realize, experience, and learn to trust in the love of God through the love of our parents or earliest caregivers. The love of a parent is the doorway through which we come to know the love of God. It is essential for parents to love their children. It is equally important for children to see their parents loving each other.

Knowing deeply God's love in us is to know that God is love. This reveals the essence and the truth of God's love; it is secure and trustworthy, perfect in unity. This truth is revealed in the gospel today. After Judas departs the scene, Jesus says, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him'. What is this glory and what does it mean?

Jesus glorifies the Father by revealing the Father's love and goodness to the world. Jesus enfleshes in his person the invisible truth and unity of the Father's love. The Father is glorified in the Son because the Father is seen and known in him. The Father revels and rejoices in the life and love of the Son, not only out of complete love for the Son, but because the Son reveals to the world the love of the Father.

In this glory, we see the Father loving the Son, and the Son loving the Father. They are a perfect unity of love. This is the love we have been given, and called to make known to the world through our love for one another. The love of God is confirmed for us in that, while we were still sinners, the Son of God died for us. As we are loved, so are we to love.

As the love of the Father is seen in the Son, we can also see the love of a parent in the joy, laughter, or freedom of spirit in the personality of their child. Such a child is revealing or imitating the love it has received and experienced from the parent. The parent is 'glorified' in the child, as the child is glorified in them. This is the root and foundation of our love for God, and his love for us. To love well is to know and accept that we are first loved by the Lord, often through others. As we have been loved, so shall we learn to love.

Reveal the glory of God. Show people an attitude of love, kindness, and patience. You will be living the gospel and sharing it with others.

Please pray about and respond generously to the CSA. Tables and representatives will be available in the back of church this weekend and next. I thank the Stewardship Commission for their time and effort on this important event. I thank each of you for your generous support.

Father John Esper.

