

May 14, 2023
The Sixth Sunday of Easter
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Way Above My Pay Grade- Love #2

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. We've been talking about God's call to us to be “way above our pay grade,” and last week we hit on the big one “way above my pay grade-loving Christ.” Love of Christ is rooted in reality and it's rooted in an understanding that we are sinners and hopelessly lost. Christ has saved us. He's the one who has, if you remember, the little catapult, that catapulted us right towards Him. We understand that catapult or balance as an object lesson for justification-being made right with God, because God loves us. So, what should our response be? To love Him back.

Now when we talk about love, understand this is not the cheap, pandering love of society or what is oftentimes put forward, unfortunately by the church today. That kind of love that says ‘God is love, love, love, love. God is all about love or well to quote The Beatles, “All you need is love!” No, the reality is again back to that balance or catapult. God is the author of true love, of unconditional love. He sent His Son out of love to balance out the sins of His creation. He does this because He loves His creation, and in particular, He loves that part of His creation that is created in His image. There were no conditions on mankind for His love, for Him to send His Son. No, He sent His son because of our condition. We're hopeless because God hates sin. Sin is evil. When we look at proverbs 8 verse 13, the second-half of the verse, we read about that, “pride and arrogance in the way of evil and perverted speech, I hate.” That's God speaking, He hates sin. I started with the second-half of the verse on purpose. What does the first half of the verse say? Proverbs 8:13 the first half; “The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.”

Now we've heard ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ but what is part of that wisdom? Hating sin, hating that which is evil; which flies in the face of love, love, love, love, love. Now you might say but Pastor Matt, I've heard it put this way-‘God hates sin, but He loves

the sinner;' right? No, wrong, absolutely wrong. In fact, if you look at Psalm 5:5, "the boastful shall not stand before your eyes. You hate evildoers." God hates sinners. Psalm 11, verse 5: "The Lord tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who does violence." The point here is this, we need to make sure that we don't look around, condemn others, hate others. Rather, we're supposed to look in the mirror and see that by nature I am a poor miserable sinner. Or as we just sang in the sermon hymn, "Chief of sinners, though I be; Jesus shed his blood for me. Died that I might live on high, lives or was raised from the dead, that I might never die."

It is true, God is love and He desires all men to be saved. It's true that's the reason He sent Jesus. But again, it takes us back to the balance, the catapult. Jesus, through whom all things were made that was made, is put down on this side by God. We are catapulted towards heaven, but there are those who cling to the bucket and say, 'I don't wanna go. I wanna be here. I want to do it my way.' And there are those who climb out of the bucket before Jesus even hits it; saying 'I found another way. I'm gonna do it this way, I'm gonna follow this great teacher, this great prophet, this great whatever.' And understand where God is at—they have reinjected His gift. They have rejected His son who He sent out of love and who died the most horrific death. They are choosing to love someone else or something else or maybe self. And the reality is this; that leads to condemnation and God hates that. I know that sounds harsh, but here's another big reality. God knows better than us and He does not need us. He hasn't signed a contract with us for us to be His public relations consultants. He calls us to speak the truth and yes to do it in love.

And about now you might be feeling like you were there on the Pentecost Sunday, when Peter gave a sermon and man he just hammered the people to the heart, and the men of Israel said, 'what must we do to be saved? What are we to do? And I'll tell you. You need to ask yourself the big question, the Peter question. The question that Jesus asked Peter. "Peter, do you love me?" Peter had earlier said even though all these may desert you, I will never desert you. And when he said that

Jesus told him very clearly, “and tonight before the rooster crows you're going to deny me three times,” and that's exactly what Peter did.

And so, after His resurrection, when He meets with His disciples, He holds Peter accountable. He asks him, “do you love me?” three times. And when He asked that third time, we read Peter was grieved. He said to him the third time “do you love me?” Peter responds, “Lord, you know everything, you know I love you. And Jesus says, “feed my sheep.” And then Jesus says, “Peter the time is going to come were you going to be put on the spot again and you're going to die a horrible, ugly death. They are going to stretch you out; they are going to crucify you. He follows that up with these two words, “follow me.” It literally is a “Peter follow me to the cross.” Peter did. This same Peter who had deserted Jesus and denied Him three times.

“Do you love me?” That's a question I find myself asking, ‘do I really love Jesus?’ And I ask you, “do you love Jesus? And is that love, if you say yes, it is a Valentines Day, a Mother's Day, a birthday kind of day? You know, the kind of day where you have one of these. And you have a card, and you give that person a card. You did your job, you did your duty, you remembered them. And you cared to give them a “Hallmark card, not a Walmart card.” Or, is it the kind of love, where you think about Jesus every day? You talk to Jesus every day; you learn more about Jesus every day.

In fact, you might want to ask yourself and since it's Mother's Day I'm going to put this question in the terms of a question for the men on a Mother's Day. “If you treated your wife, the mother of your children, like you treat Jesus, would you still be married?” Would you still be married if you thought about your wife one time each week? If you talked to her once a week? But hey, you compliment her at least once a month. Or if you never learned her likes, so you could practice doing what she liked; or got her presents that she liked. And you took the time you should, to learn her dislikes so that you don't annoy her; don't get her a present like you want.

Too often, we think about Jesus like that. We'll give Him a little bit of time each week, we talked to him little bit each week, and well that's good enough. Why learn more about Him? And there's the problem. We don't think about who we are, and what He did. Too often, like Peter, we talk the talk, but I think we've all heard this before: "talk is cheap." So, what changed Peter from denying to loving Jesus and dying on the cross like Jesus? He saw Jesus arrested, he saw Jesus on trial, he was too scared to follow Jesus to the cross, but he saw the risen Jesus and it all came into focus. It's probably why he writes in our New Testament reading for today; because he understands what you and I face. He writes, "though you now have not seen Him, you love Him; you believe in Him, you rejoice in Him with an inexpressible joy. You are filled with His glory.

And then I want you to think about this there is a reason that we are called the bride of Christ. Because He's the groom. When you marry someone, hopefully you're marrying someone you love. And most likely you are marrying the person you love because that person who has asked you to marry him loves you; and has taken time to be with you. And it's more than once a week. Has taken time to talk with you. Again, it's more than once a week, it's multiple times a day! That person is someone who cares enough to learn about you and find what it is you like and what it is you dislike and then heaps on the things that you like and avoids the things you dislike like the plague. And when someone is like that, they care, they love you, and you see its real love. It's that greater love. They're dying to self for your sake.

That is the love we're supposed to have for Christ. Because He didn't just die to self, spend time with you, talk to you. No, He literally; He really did die for you. The question is, "will you be the loving bride that loves Him back with an equal love? Will you spend that time? Will you learn what He loves and learn what he dislikes and avoid it? Will you love Jesus? It is my hope and my prayer that we all really think about what it means to be the bride of Christ, and that we will love the Groom with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. In our Savior's Name, Amen.