

Sunday, February 14, 2021

I Corinthians 13: 4-13 Matthew 22: 34-40

Love is in the Air:

Unconditional Love- Ludas and Agape

Happy Valentine's Day—Love really is in the Air today! We conclude our series celebrating love and rejoicing in the relationships that we are in. We recall that there are 7 ways to understand love according to Greek translations. Two weeks ago our focus was on three as defined by the Greek words: EROS- romantic love, PHILIA-friendship love and STORGE-love between parent and child which is returned and then shared with the next generations. Last week we focused on PRAGMA and PHILAUTIA and today our focus is on LUDAS which is a playful kind of love and AGAPE which is the most special, most respectful of all love. It is the kind of love Jesus refers to again and again throughout his ministry and is the one all of the Christian faith encompasses.

This is Valentine's Day a day which is often recognized as special for school age children, and dating couples and people long married. However, this year with the pandemic upon us, many traditions to honour this day of love are just not occurring. With children not in school they will miss the exchange of the cute cut out cards with cartoon characters or animals which cause giggles and laughter amongst them. Teachers cannot assign printing practise of writing the names of the friends on these little cards because what is occurring is so different than in previous years. But there is still something to celebrate the playful love that comes with butterflies in the stomach, smiles and giggles. It is this ludas love that occurs between adults as well as people search for their partners and try to impress potential dates. IT is a special kind of love where poetry beginning with "Roses are red, violets are blue, honey is sweet and so are you" are given are exchanged. It is a love focused on fun and teasing. No matter the result of this playfulness, it is still love.

But what is love? Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians writes to this church to enable them to understand the greatest gift. Of faith, hope and love, the greatest is love. And so describes this love. This passage is often shared during weddings, anniversaries and during memorial and funeral services to describe the love that exists at the beginning of a marriage. And also the love that is important to share throughout one's life. Paul describes this love with different attributes and characteristics—patient, kind not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing,

but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. All this occurs because there is love. But where does love come from?

Who/ what is the source? God alone is our Source of love for God is love. And this love is agape the greatest of all the kinds of love. Agape. But what is agape love? Agape love involves the time we take to listen to others. It is when we respect differences and when we ask the opinions of others. It is sharing in a relationship where there is honesty if a problem arises. And it is love when there is spiritual growth.

Mr. Rogers was a man who looked around his neighbourhood to see people who were helpers; that is people doing a task that would enable another to learn, grow, understand and share a little bit about the world. He often included the people who children would come in contact with- people who were teachers, mail carriers, garbage collectors. He would talk with these individuals who helped the community be its best and through these discussions his audience would learn more about loving neighbours no matter who they are or what they did.

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan as found in Luke 10:25-37 is a story about a man who was robbed, hurt and left by the road. Two people saw the man but each in turn did not stop to assist. But it was a Samaritan man who picked up the one who was hurt, took him into his care, paid for another person to look after him and followed up with him to make sure he was all right. This is agape love. This man shared of himself without counting the cost, looked after the man who was in need and ensured he was well. This is love= agape, unconditional love from one person to another.

Agape love is also given by God through his gift to us in Jesus His Son. Jesus came to live and teach us how to love, he came to show us the way of love. And what he did was so remarkable we are still talking about it over 2000 years later. He died on the cross by giving his life for our sake, Jesus showed us what true love is. But what is most amazing is that he arose and his resurrection gives us hope beyond our life on earth. Jesus is alive and if we believe and know Christ as the Gift from God that He is, we too will live forever. We too will know what to say and do. And we will know the extent of his love for us all.

All Jesus asks is that we live out our faith by following his command to love. It may not be easy but it is what God calls us to say and do each day—to live and love unconditionally, sharing in faith, hope and joy. “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it:

'Love your neighbor as yourself." Let us remember this as we strive to love others not only on this Valentines' Day but every day.

Let us pray as I share this Valentine for God whose author is unknown;

Gracious God, my love for you grows daily. Whenever I witness an act of kindness or receive an unexpected gift, I am reminded of your expansive heart. Even during times of duress, of sadness, or of heartache, I take comfort in knowing that nothing can separate me from your love. Let this love in me blossom and flower so that I reflect your compassion and mercy in all that I say and do. In gratitude and grace, I pray. Amen.