

Sunday, January 31, 2021

Song of Solomon 2:1-7 | John 3:16-18 | Matthew 15:21-28

Love is in the Air:

What is Love? EROS< PHILIA< STORGE

The sun shines bright over the sparkling snow and ice patches are covered in salt to prevent slips and falls. It is winter and there is snow on the ground while we bundle up and keep warm! But what kind of snow do you see and experience where you are? The Inuit have many words and phrases to describe snow and ice in its various forms. The Inuktitut language uses different words to describe snow and where it is-. Qanik is snow falling, aputi- snow on the ground, or the kind it is: pukak is crystalline snow on the ground. When the people speak of ice specific words describe its nature and ultimately its purpose for the people: siku is ice, but nilak is freshwater ice melted for drinking as opposed to aniu which is snow used to make water in general and one must be careful of the qinu as it is slushy ice by the sea. For the Inuit, many words are used to describe what we see as snow.

IN these lockdown days there have been situations where being human truly has come forth. People have been working under very stressful circumstances and for many health care workers this covid19 has been the challenge of their careers. But they do what they have been trained to do and most truly care about who they are serving. Just like each of us does as we share in relationship with others, whatever this connection is and professes to be.

Love is in the Air. This is the focus of our next series leading up to Valentine's Day when we celebrate love and rejoice in the relationships that we are in. But this word love has often been overused, over shared and not necessarily fully understood. If one Googles the word "love" there are over 13 billion sites. This is not surprising since we often hear people say "I love this book, chocolate chip cookies and the warmth of fresh out of the dryer pajamas". And through this objective form of love we are not really sure what is meant. We know that there is a liking, fondness and enjoyment by these objects but what does this word love really mean?

Jesus new commandment states, "Love one another as I have loved you." What does this commandment really mean when we realize that there are 7 ways to understand love according the Greek translations. In these next 3 weeks we will look at these different meanings of love and how they are described in God's Word for our understanding and to know the depth of God's love for us all.

Today our focus will be on EROS, PHILIA and STORGE. Eros is the kind of love that involves an intense sexual desire for someone. Usually it is filled with passion and often interpreted to be lust. King David saw Bathsheba sunbathing one day and even though they were already married to other people, he wanted to be with her. He fulfills his desire and she becomes pregnant. Eventually David plots to kill her husband and trouble follows. But there is something special and amazing about romantic love that exists between consenting adults. Solomon was gifted with wisdom and was creative in his thoughts and feelings. He wrote many songs but it is his Song of Solomon where we read of the romantic relationship he desires with his first wife. Yes, we do know that Solomon ended up having many wives and concubines but it is through his Song that we come to understand romantic love. But Solomon is also a faithful believer in God and so when he writes of the love he has for this first wife, he also speaks of his love for God. So when we read, "I'm my beloved's and he is mine, " we need to understand this as not only the intimate romantic love of adults, but also the first love relationship that is possible with God. After all, we must remember that we are created in God's image and God is love and made us to give and receive love.

Philia—As we grow up we encourage children to make friends, best friends and to keep friends along the way as we live our lives. Philia love is the kind of love that exists between good friends through the years. And a test of this is when it seems that you can pick up a conversation with them and you might think that even though you have not talked for several years it is as if you never lost a day. Poet Joseph Parry (1841-1903) wrote: "Make new friends, but keep the old; Those are silver, these are gold," to describe friendship which is philia love.

Jesus loved his disciples in this philia manner. This group started out as a group of people whom Jesus called to follow him. Some were related as brothers in business, some were friends of friends and others were local leaders. But when Jesus said, "Come, follow me," they immediately dropped their fishing nets and any other work tools and followed. They knew they would be on an adventure of their lives. When Jesus died on the cross, they were afraid and did not know their future. But after his resurrection, this group of friends, lead by Peter continued to minister and teach and tell Jesus' story long after he ascended into heaven. In John's first letter we also realize that this philia love is the kind of love that clearly defines what it means to be a Christian. This philia love is the reason we believe in love for Christ because Jesus died for the sake of others. Out of love for his friends and for all those who would follow and believe in him Jesus became the sacrifice given in love. And according to I John 3 we too are called to lay down our lives for one another- because of this philia love. If we truly believe and know that

God's love is in us, how can we see someone in need and refuse help? This is true for us today as well. People need help, support and the knowledge that others care. They also need to know that they are loved as Christ calls us to love others.

We know that across the country there are many people in need today- people who are homeless, hurt and hungry. How might we share in this philia love as Christ calls us to? One such way is to help raise money for charities serving people in need. The annual Coldest Night of the Year walk will be held virtually on February 20. Here in Windsor this event sponsors the work of the Windsor Downtown Mission and if you are interested in sharing philia love, please go to cnoy.org or contact us through the Glenwood Church website or Facebook page.

This philia love calls us to act and do what is needed to be true to our belief in God, and to live out Christ's commandment to love others. When one asks what is it that Christians do? The response is simply we are known by our love – giving and caring for those in need, supporting people who need not a hand out, but a hand up into a new life. By this philia- love, we will know that we are from the truth and our hearts are filled with hope. This kind of love endures throughout one's life and it is through the friendships that last, that one will always find hope.

The third kind of love for today is called 'storge' which may be confused with philia or love among friends. This kind of love is found Matthew 15 where a Canaanite mother is asking for Jesus to heal her daughter. The disciples ask Jesus to send her away because she keeps shouting at the disciples to help. Jesus tells the woman that he only came to save the lost sheep of Israel. But it is then she comes up to him, kneels before him and says, "Help me." He states, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." He is wondering what she will do with this statement. But she quickly responds, "Yes, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Jesus is amazed at this woman who is pleading for her daughter's health and willing to discuss openly with him her thoughts and her place in the world at that time. Jesus answers her and addresses her, "Woman great is your faith. Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Jesus and his disciples are in Gentile country when this woman who is a Canaanite walks up to the group of disciples who are Israelite Jews. This was a bold move against societal norm as women were not to speak openly to men in the street yet alone a Canaanite woman with Jewish men. Yet what is ironic is that in Israel Jesus is trying to convince people He was the Messiah and was challenged to prove it signs but here this woman is convinced already.

She knows who he is. Jesus tries to put her off with a test stating that his ministry would be brief on earth and his first priority was with the people of Israel. But it is for her daughter she pleads and states that even the dogs eat the crumbs that the Israelites leave. Jesus wanted the disciples and the woman to understand fully that she may not be able to sit down at the Messiah's table and eat with the "children," but she should be allowed to pick up some of the crumbs they drop. She wants some of the uncovenanted mercy of God, because of the love she has for Jesus and for her daughter. This woman believes that Jesus' saving grace is for all people.

This Canaanite woman risks many things- talking in public to Jewish men, telling Jesus he is the Messiah and that he is capable of healing. Out of storge love for her daughter, this woman puts herself in front of Jesus, and pleads for her to heal the girl. This love is a very strong bond that is not easily broken between parents and their children.

Another example of this storge love is between God the Father and Jesus. When Jesus is baptized and rises up out of the water, the clouds dissipate and a dove descends upon the scene. A voice from heaven states, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

These are three meanings for love. Eros,romantic Philia-friendship and Storge-parent-child. We will continue to discover what love is and means in these next two weeks. In the meantime, take a moment and reflect on the kinds of love you have received in your life—from your parents to you—from you to your children; with romantic partner, and with the friendships of the past and even of today as well as how you are reaching out to others in Christian kindness. Don't forget to reflect also upon your love for God! How are you at understanding what love is and what it can be in your life? Maybe you still love your chocolate chip cookies, but do you think about your children in a new way? Maybe by sharing philia love you can understand more clearly what we are called to do as we help others in need. And maybe just maybe, you will receive love in a new way.

Jesus gave us a new commandment. "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 15:12) As we continue to explore what love is, let us be mindful that we are called to love in faith and in action. For love in any language pulls us all together and this is what we need right now and always!

Let us pray: God of love, we thank you for the ways we might love you and each other. Help us to understand this love as we seek to know you and grow in love for you. Hear us O God as we pray and as we praise your holy name. Amen.