

Sunday, February 7, 2021

Genesis 21:1-7 Daniel 1: 1-20

Love is in the Air:

Love is all Around Us- Pragma, Philautia”

Love is in the Air. We continue in our series leading up to Valentine’s Day when we will celebrate love and rejoice in the relationships that we are in. We recall that there are 7 ways to understand love according to Greek translations. Last week 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. Today our focus is on PRAGMA and PHILAUTIA.

The Pickles comic strip focuses on an older couple Opal and Earl Pickle and their life together. We don’t know how long they have been married but we do know about their daughter, little grandson Nelson and their cat and dog. As a couple they have been together a long time and know each other very well. Their relationship is strong and yes there are disagreements, but their love endures. In this particular cartoon, Opal is sitting in the living room when Earl asks his wife, “What’s for dinner, Opal?” She responds, “You’re on your own tonight, Earl. I can’t get up. I’ve got. C.O.L.” What’s C.O.L? he asks. Opal states, “Cat on Lap.” Earl, not too impressed, then says, “Having a cat on your lap doesn’t mean you get excused from all your jobs!” Opal states, “ Yes, it does!” It does? And in the last frame we see Earl sitting in the chair calling out, “Here, Kitty, Kitty!” Why does this cause us to smile? We see that Earl wants to get out of the task of making dinner and so he tries to get the cat to be the reason. We also see that there is playfulness in the roles each one has in their marriage and one can really imagine what happens next! The Pickles’ love is described as PRAGMA It is a marriage that has been long lasting and it has been a while since the honeymoon phase ended. The romantic love experienced by both in the relationship has settled into a loving mix of storge and philia and life continues on each day. It is an enduring love.

Abraham and Sarah have an enduring love as they continue to live to see God’s promise being fulfilled through them. We remember that God’s promise was that they would be the parents of as many people as there are stars in the sky. They left their home to establish themselves in the promised land but they have had no children and they are old. Yet their faith is strong and God knows this. Abraham and Sarah also know that in God’s time all will be fulfilled. And so they are patient, their love endures, and their faithfulness continues to God.

Eventually Sarah gives birth to Isaac and the couple begin a new part of their life as parents. Through faith and their pragma love for each other God fulfills his promise.

Maybe you know people whose love has endured through many years of struggle, learning, losses, ups and downs. What is it that has kept them going? Their love that goes beyond the basic care of what is for dinner and who is making it. It is a time of love that is based on practicality, and driven by both the head and the heart. It is a reciprocative relationship whereby both persons give and take from each other for the benefit of both. There is mutual respect, trust and admiration. It is love that lasts because what both parties are searching for result later on in their lives together. There is the need to wake up from a nap to know where the other person is and knowing that the other person will do anything for them.

The other kind of love known as philautia meaning self-love or self-compassion. King Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and besieged it, and took Daniel and his friends back to his palace where they would be trained to serve the court. Daniel and his friends were to also receive the daily portion of royal rations of food and wine. But Daniel refused to defile himself with this as he only wanted vegetables and water to eat and maintain himself. Daniel and his friends knew what was needed to keep himself strong and healthy. And in this, he looked after himself and had self-love. When we consider this kind of love we must refer to it as a healthy self-esteem. According to Dr Neel Burton in Psychology Today this kind of love “appraises one’s self worth relative to that of others. It is the matrix through which we see, feel and act and reflects and determines our relation to ourselves, to others and to the world. IF we feel we have wroth that causes us to think, feel and act in healthy ways we have good self-esteem that enables us to give and receive properly. This feeling of self worth begins in childhood when parents teach their children how to care for themselves whether it is brushing hair, teeth or other personal hygiene. This self- love also continues as one grows older and the need for physical self- care is realized when certain tasks are no longer possible as they once were. It is important for us to love ourselves and take care of the bodies we have been given. But we also not go to the extremes and hurt ourselves for the sake of vanity or putting oneself above others based upon looks and abilities. Yes we are to love ourselves but we must do so to maintain levels of satisfaction that are not extreme. We are worthy of self love, because made us in His image. But the image we offer to the world must be good and caring and truly of a person who loves themselves and is truly grateful.

When we think about these two types of love- pragma and philautia we learn about the enduring love we can have with another person. We also must realize that Jesus loves us for

who we are not for what we might be or become. Looking after ourselves and being the best person we can be is truly love. For if we want an enduring loving relationship we must live a healthy lifestyle so that we can live long and prosper.

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. Paul writes in Galatians 5:13, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. Thanks be to God

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.