

What the World Needs Now

I John 4:7-11, 18-21

“Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God, but he (or she) that does not love does not know God for God is love. So, beloved, let us love one another.” (1 John 4: 7&8) This theme of love inspired me to do an Internet search using the key word *love one another*. There are a lot of song lyrics with that key word, and most of them are not even church songs! One example is a song performed by a group called the *Youngbloods*, a song made famous again in the movie *Forrest Gump*.

Love is but the song we sing, and fear's the way we die
You can make the mountains ring or make the angels cry.
Know the dove is on the wing and you need not know why.
C'mon people now, smile on your brother.
Ev'rybody get together Try and love one another right now.

And there was a song by the group *Utopia* on their *Anthology* album:

And when you feel afraid, love one another
When you've lost your way, love one another
When you're all alone, love one another
When you're far from home, love one another
When you're down and out, love one another
All your hopes run out, love one another
When you need a friend, love one another
When you're near the end, love one another
We got to love one another

Finally, there is that most famous song from the 1960's, written by (Hal David and Burt Bacharach and recorded Jackie DeShannon:

What the world needs now is love, sweet love
It's the only thing that there's just too little of
What the world needs now is love, sweet love
No, not just for some, but for everyone.

There is wisdom deep in the human spirit that knows we need to love and be loved. Almost 2000 years ago, the author of a short letter, attributed to John and placed near the end of the New Testament, told us that the secret to life is to *love one another*. That author then claimed that the source of love -- the power to redeem and give meaning to life -- is God. The God who sent Jesus is the source of love.

Can we know God is the source of love as John said? Well, the answer to that has to be “yes” and “no.” No, we can't know that in the same way we know how to troubleshoot a computer or study for a test, or even what makes life worth living. In fact, we can probably know all those infinitely more clearly than we can know the depth, breadth, and extent of God's nature and purpose -- even God's existence. But, yes, we can know God in the way we know an artist from observing his or her works. We can know God the way we know a friend by watching them live life, by talking with them, by talking with others who know them, and by observing how we feel

in their presence. We can know God by observing the universe and by coming to know other human beings and ourselves more deeply.

Ultimately, you have to choose. It is a choice to believe that the human emotion love reflects the nature of the reality and mystery behind the universe -- *God*. You can know by faith that God is love. You can choose to know because the writer of 1 John said so, because Jesus said so in the gospels, and because that's how life makes sense to you. That's how I'm in sync with life. I know by choosing to believe because believing is seeing.

What the world needs now and always is love. What the world needs is God for God is love. If this is true, what does that mean for our attitudes and our priorities? How will such a truth disrupt our comfortable values? What possibilities lie along that road?

Love is the single most important aspect of life -- certainly of Christian living. It is the heart of faith and the context in which we walk our life journeys. Love is the light by which we navigate: love for God, love for others, and love for self. But what does that mean? How do we live and relate and make choices based on love?

Love is the attitude and perspective applied to how we strive to use the gift of life: how we live, invest ourselves, use our life gifts, and in short, do what God invites us to do. Each of us has a wealth of talents, passions, possessions, and experience. How we use our gifts, and for what ends, represents the stewardship of our lives. Stewardship is a choice based on love.

Love is also the attitude and perspective applied to letting go, to not striving, and to turning loose the control of our lives in order to be present to God. This is really the opposite of striving for something. In that way, it is like the biblical idea of Sabbath -- living by not controlling. To live this way requires a deep level of trust: trust in free and unwarranted forgiveness, and in absolute love. To love ourselves means to embrace our own identity -- who we are at the core of our being.

To live fully as ourselves is to love, actively love, one another and ourselves. It is also to let go that very identity and open ourselves to the unity of all of life and be part of the One in love. The world needs us to love by becoming all we can be. The world also needs us to love one another by *being still and knowing God*. We need both striving and surrender. To be honest, most of us probably need to practice the surrender more than the striving because of our cultural context that is so geared toward achievement. Let us be reminded that living well is loving well.

Let us be reminded that Jesus left the Church behind to change the world -- to help bring into practice the values of the Kingdom of God. Such change and such values stand in contrast to the continuation of power structures that exploit for greed, control, and money. The church still has that mission, though today she is too often caught up with cares and concerns about survival and success. Individuals and congregations who are willing to see and hear, however, can know that the invitation of Jesus is still our invitation.

Our mission is to change the world, but now, in order to change the world, we have to change the church. It's not a matter of addressing what we believe or how we worship, but what makes us

church – the fundamental reason for being and the primary goal for our striving. Our mission is to love one another with *Christ-like* love -- human love that has divine attitude.

Beloved, let us love one another!

Our mission is to love with very human *affection* that has divine attitude.

To love one another in this congregation by supporting and listening,

By my being true to own journey and respecting you on yours

To love one another in the larger community and the world

By seeking the greatest good for the human family: justice, peace, and the potential for growth

Our invitation is to love with very human *friendship* that has divine attitude

To love one another in this family of faith

By embracing our common interests to find meaning for our lives and joy in our living

To love one another in the human family through our common concerns of bringing justice and peace in a world our children will inherit

Our calling is to love with a very human *passion* that has divine attitude

To love one another at Crossroads as beloved of God -- face to face

To love one another, and all others, with heat and heart and divine desire

Jesus still invites us to follow his way.

Still challenges each of us and all of us to risk the demands and dangers

And love one another!