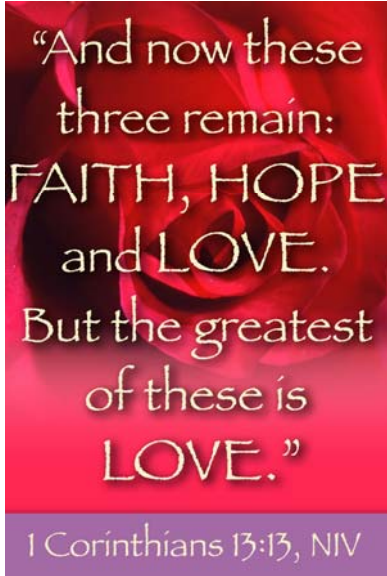


LOVE IS ACTION

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Sunday, July 2, 2006



1 John 3:18-24: Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in **truth and action**. And by this we will **know** that we are from the truth and will **reassure** our hearts before him **whenever our hearts condemn us**; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts **do not condemn** us, we have **boldness** before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Have you seen the musical, “**Fiddler on the Roof?**” Those among us who have been married for many years will undoubtedly remember and maybe even sometime repeat to one another, like Tienka and I do ~ the delightful dialogue between two of the main characters Tevye and his wife Golde. Tevye asks “do you love me?” Golde says “You’re a fool, Tevye” He says, “I know...” But do you love me? Golde says, “Do I love you? For twenty-five years I’ve washed your clothes Cooked your meals, cleaned your house, given you children, milked the cow ~ after twenty-five years, why talk about love right now? I’m your wife Tevye! “I know...” But do you love me? She says, “I suppose I do’ and he responds “And I suppose I love you too. Then they both sing, “It doesn’t change a thing ~ But even so ~ after twenty-five years ~ It’s nice to know!

Well, I believe we all know that people who truly love and care for one another, should never ever stop telling each other about the strong love that binds them. But talk is not enough. **Tevye has it exactly right ~ love is action!** Love is never words alone!

John begins his explanation that **love is action** with a searching question: “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? **Hear the surprise in his voice!** Obviously, if a person with possessions sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help ---- **how can God’s love possibly be in that person?** At times we discover deep in ourselves and recognize in others the same surprising fact. We claim to be Christians and talk about God’s love in us, **but seeing** how we sometimes **behave and deal with one another** – people quietly wonder --- **how can God’s love possibly be in that person?**

Love Is Action There is no love for God **that is not coupled** with love for people. The self-righteous, self-centered, “Lone Ranger” kind of Christian is basically no Christian at all.

Love Is Action The Gospels mention numerous occasions where Jesus **encountered the Pharisees**. It was not the Jewish faith that offended Jesus. He was himself a Jew. **It was those who used their religion to elevate themselves and then use their religion as a bludgeon to beat down others that became the object of their scorn.**

Love Is Action A major portion of the world’s wealth is concentrated in so called “Christian” nations. What better plan could God have for meeting the needs of the unfortunate of this world than have his people to share out of their abundance?

A Christian lady was visiting Ethiopia that land that has known so much suffering and despair. She saw the small children with the swollen bellies of malnutrition. She saw the diseased and dying by the thousands from the ravages of drought. She said that she was in such despair that she felt like screaming out at God, **until she realized that it was God screaming out at her.**

Love Is Action We are God's plan for the caring for the unfortunate of this world! In our Quo Vadis initiatives we accept that we are God's plan for the suffering and the lost in Cocoa Beach. We refuse to be called part of God's plan for the Space Coast and a suffering world and yet do nothing about it! **Christian love is always centered in the needs of others, whether they are sitting beside us in the pew, live across the street or are scattered across the world.**

Love Is Action indeed! Jesus taught us a secret that would forever change our lives and our relationships with one another and the rest of the world! "I give you a new commandment," Jesus said, "that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. **By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

If we do not love one another -- **if we are negative about some of us** -- if we ignore one another -- **if we hold grudges against one another** -- if we fail to love -- **this church will fail to be a true church of Jesus Christ and the future will be in jeopardy, even in spite of the glorious history ~ beautiful buildings ~ great deeds of the past and the beautiful programs that we are working on.**

Are we giving an accurate witness to the love of Jesus Christ **or are we sowing seeds of anger, resentment, and hatred?** Love is not optional for the follower of Jesus. There is only one way that people know to whom we belong -- **by how much we love.** Nothing else we do matter nearly as much. Love is our primary witness to the world. If the world cannot sense our love for one another, -- we will still be called a Church ~ but we will not be a true Church ~ definitely not a Church of Jesus Christ.

There are some things in life that you cannot fake. There are no ifs, buts or maybes! If we in this place love one another, the world will know that this is truly a Church of Jesus Christ. They will notice and believe our love for one another and they will **admire** it ... and they will **desire** it And they will heed our calls and invitations ... and these pews will become fuller and fuller Sunday after Sunday.

This means that love for one another is as much a sign to the outside world as this bread and wine that we shared this morning! **See the elements of bread and wine?** When Jesus held bread in his hand, broke it and said: This is my body -- everyone around the table knew exactly what he meant. They then understood that every time they eat & drink at the Lord's Table they would remember that his body was broken and his blood was shed because of his love for them and for us.

Those who knew Jesus in person **saw a glimpse of the quality of his love for us.** On a cross outside Jerusalem they recognized the greatest love. That is exactly where the basic message of Christianity was born. Even now, today -- we hear the faint voice coming to us through the ages, **"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another?"**

Prayer

"O, we love you Jesus, because you first loved us."

Amen