

March 1 Worship
2nd Sunday In Lent

Reader- Aaron, Sophie & Ethan Hopkins

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.”* 1 John 4:8

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Opening Scripture- Psalm 121(page 536)

Opening Chorus- 513- Lord, Listen To Your Children Praying

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: We are met in the presence of God

People: And we do not meet alone.

Leader: With the angels in the highest heaven

People: We gather to worship the Lord.

Leader: With Abraham and Sarah

People: We gather to worship the Lord.

Leader: With the saints of every age

People: We gather to worship the Lord.

Leader: We embark on our own journey of faith

People: God’s Holy name be praised.

Leader: God makes of us a great people

People: God’s Holy name be praised.

Leader: In the desert and in the den, in barrio and basilica

People: God’s Holy name be praised.

Leader: We journey in the presence of God.

People: And we do not journey alone.

Hymn of Praise- 26- The God Of Abraham Praise

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- We praise you loving and eternal God for your love of all people expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We praise you for his commitment to justice, his zeal for true worship of you and his willingness to replace all other sacrifices with the sacrifice of his own life.

In his name we offer you our worship while we pray as Jesus taught, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy

will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end. Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Genesis 12:1-4(page 9)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- John 3:1-17(page 924)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 646- Lord, Speak To Me

New Testament Scripture- Romans 4:1-5,13-17(page 979-978)

Message

“For God So Loved The World”

Is there any possible way that we can measure or quantify the “Love of God?” It would be simpler to count the numbers of stars in the sky or the grains of sand on any beach. The love that God has for us, His creation, is beyond our ability to comprehend. Why then, should I even attempt to speak about it, knowing that it is not in my power to explain this amazing part of God's dealing with us? I am going to go ahead, anyway, because I don't know any better and I want to.

It may seem that the majority of the topics that I choose tend to wind up talking about the love of God in one way or another. It would be very easy for me to spend more time speaking of sin and the consequences of living in a manner not pleasing to God. Going off on the many, many ways that we find pleasure in displeasing our Creator and how we tend to go out of our way to do things opposite of what we know to be right can be very satisfying but not very constructive in teaching about faith.

I can see how easy and how satisfying it could be to stand up here on Sunday morning and preach on Hell and Damnation. The problem with that is, I cannot find myself talking to all of you about things that I have done time and again in my life.

Who am I to tell anyone how to live and what sin is? I have learned years ago to not tell anyone, "Do as I say, not as I do."

God is not about Hell and Damnation, He is about Love and Redemption. God did not create us in order to have someone to push around and bark orders at, He created us to share with, to love and to have us love in return. How does God describe love? Turn to page 1000 in your pew Bible and read along with me from 1st Corinthians, chapter 13, verses 4-8; "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away." This is God's description of love, taken from His Word. God is love, this is the essence of God.

It would have been so simple for God, when He created us, to have made us totally dependent and completely subservient to His will. We could have been made to worship and love God without conscious thought. Why did God make a creature that would turn its back on Him and walk away without so much as a "thank you?" This leads to one of the most profound questions ever asked; Why in the world does God love us? I don't think that any person, anywhere can sufficiently answer this question. Why would God, who is all powerful, love us? Anybody have an answer?

God does not love us because we are lovable. He does not love us because we deserve it. The state of our existence since the fall of humanity in the garden has been of rebellion and disobedience. In the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 17, verse 9, we read; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" Paul's letter to the Romans tells us in chapter 3, verse 10-12; "As it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one." Once again I ask, why in the world does God love us?

As it says in our scripture this morning; "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." This is the totality of God; "God is love." He doesn't just love, He is love. Because of this, everything that God has done or will ever do is love. We have all read of the wrath of God or God's retaliation against humanity many times in our Bible history. How can a God who supposedly loves us do terrible things to His people? You have to answer this in a way that may not bring comfort to us all. God has the power to do whatever it is that He wants to do. Period.

God has brought vengeance against humanity a few times in our history. He destroyed the world in the great flood for one. Why? Because, according to the Bible, the world and humanity had become so evil and corrupt that God decided to start over. He could have, had He wanted to, completely wiped out humanity and

just begun again with a new creation. God decided to eliminate the corruption in the world and allow it to rebuild on its own. He was not upset at His creation, He was upset at what His creation had become. Noah and his family were allowed to take on the task of saving enough of God's creatures to repopulate the earth and start over. God wants for humanity to succeed and share in the glory of God. It is our nature to turn away and try to do it our way that causes the problem. We cannot blame God for our own stubbornness.

You have all heard the term "Agape Love" used when referring to God. This is not the easiest of words to understand. Agape is the Greek word for love but is a different type of love. The term "Agape Love" is almost redundant in that it technically is the same in both translations. In the New Testament, Agape Love is different from other forms of love. The essence of Agape is defined as goodwill, benevolence, and a willful delight in the object of this love. It does not refer to romantic or sexual love nor does it refer to brotherly love or friendship which has its own designation, filial love. Agape love includes faithfulness, commitment and an act of will. It is distinguished from all other types by its lofty moral nature and strong character. It is as we read in 1st Corinthians. Speaking of agape love cannot even come close to what it really is, it is virtually impossible to understand through words alone.

I am not sure that we, as Christians, can even understand what God's love, Agape love truly means. We try and try but it always seems to be just out of our reach. This is the prize that is promised to us by God, if we truly believe, if we have faith in Him. This love, that we all know exists, that God shows for us, is what we strive to be able to show for others, but seems to slip from us at just the moment we think we have found it.

We will always fall short. This is also a promise made by Jesus, we are not able to live up to that ultimate showing of of love that God shows for us. That is OK though, we have been shown the way and the light is shining there for us to reach out to. It is in the trying, the attempt for perfection, that we can learn more and more every day how God wants us to be.

What happens when we fail and forget to love as He wants us to? We go back and try again. Each day we try harder and harder to find that closeness to God that is part of our existence, part of our being.

God did not create us to be a being that would go around and be like a puppy dog, lavishing our love unquestioningly on Him. He did not create us to glorify Him. God does not require our glory, He wants us to share it with Him. God is all powerful, He does not need to be told that He is. We were made to share with God not just give to God. God wants us to come to Him willingly and in order for us to do so, He showed us the way. God gave us Jesus, His Son, the very being of God in

human form and He went to the cross to pay the way for us to be one with Him.

There is more that God has given to us to show us His love; He sent to us the Holy Spirit, to keep us in touch with Him. We are not capable of doing things God's way alone. We need to listen to the power of the Holy Spirit, love Christ and obey God. Why? Because He loves us this much! Praise be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- Heavenly Father, as you sent Abraham out to a new place and a new land, so you invite us to anticipate worlds and realms beyond our imaginations. As we journey in faith, bless us with your presence that our new life in your new world may be as real as this day we call "today." Holy Spirit, our heavenly helper, you call us to worship the Lord, our keeper. He does not slumber nor sleep. He preserves our lives forevermore. Lord Jesus Christ, life-giver to the dead, with the Father and the Holy Spirit you call into existence things that do not exist, things too wonderful for us to even imagine. You justify the ungodly with your own righteousness, and by faith we receive your grace as a pure gift. Lord Jesus, as you taught Nicodemus heavenly things, give us ears to hear your Heavenly Word, and a heart to accept your grace of a new birth from above. As you were lifted up upon the cross for us, so lift our hearts in faith that we may have eternal life with you. We bring to mind those persons among us in need of healing. Hear our prayers offered in faith that you already know the names of all who seek your touch. Though we remember we are dust and to dust we shall return, we remember that we are your precious dust. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Communion Hymn- 370- Come Celebrate Jesus

Thanksgiving Prayer- Divine Light of Our Journey, In a spirit of gratitude we give thanks for this time at your Holy Meal. This time at the Table filled us with strength, Knowing that as we continue on this Lenten journey, We will find your peace surrounding us. Amen.

Closing Hymn- Jesus, Lover Of My Soul

Benediction- Let us rejoice: God so loves the world! May God your Maker send you back into the world with creative energies refreshed. May Christ the Light illuminate your darkest moments. And may the Holy Spirit of steadfast love guide you until we worship together again. This day and forevermore. Go in peace. Amen.