

DAY 6 LOVE

1 John 3:18

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

We tend to have a flattened relationship with the concept of "love" in our culture. More often than not, our understanding of love is reduced to mere feelings and sentimentality. From songs to books to Hollywood portrayals, love is largely centered on how you feel.

The problem with this understanding of love is two-fold.

First, anyone who has any experience recognizes how fleeting feelings are. They come and go on a whim, of-

ten for no apparent reason other than that is the way one woke up that particular day. Feelings are not entirely bad and shouldn't be considered a negative thing.

Second, love based on feeling lacks commitment. To center love on how we feel means when we love is relegated to arbitrary moments when the conditions "feel" right. This is a shallow and problematic way to love. If we wait for loving feelings to come, we may never actually get around to loving others.

What John asserts here, through using the example of Jesus, is that love is an action. It is an activity of the heart, mind, and will. John refuses to allow sentimentality to dominate our understanding of love. Rather, John ties the concept of love with our actions..."Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

As we learn to love with "actions," we can sometimes get tripped up trying to exercise elaborate and extensive acts of love. But small deeds will suffice. "We can choose to act in love by taking small steps whenever we can. A smile, a hug, a phone call, a greeting, a visit - these are little steps toward love." - Hudson.

As Henri Nouwen writes, "Each step is like a candle burning in the night." Meaning that every action, albeit small is a glimpse of that light which is working to extinguish the darkness. The potency of love remains, regardless of the size of the act.

And in lent, we are invited to practice loving. It is a space to reflect on the passionate love of God for us that we, in turn, embody and give to others. God loves us not so that we can hoard the love up within ourselves, but it is to be used to animate us toward others.

This has always been the story. God's people are loved, so they can reflect that love. They are blessed to be a blessing.

And because God's love is a constant present reality, we are invited to begin to love others now, right where we are and with the people nearest to us.

Daily Practice

Ask for God's direction in taking small steps of love today. Begin with your closest neighbors or those with whom you live, and then include each person who crosses your path today. Consciously fill the day with the light of your loving deeds, however small, wherever you go.

The below reflections are written by congregants & staff of CPC. All reflections are following Trevor Hudson's book Pauses for Lent and are both heavily influenced and borrowed from his work. Any quotes without attribution should be credited to him.