

Today's service is about love: love as self-giving and sacrifice; love as commandment and instruction; love as practical action; love as the essence of life. All we need is love!

Worshipping God Together

Let us worship God by our call to worship:

Minister: Why have we come here today?

All: We have come to worship God.

MSP 449

Love divine

Opening prayer and The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray:

God of love, you *are* love. Love is your being, love is your nature, love is your purpose.

You are the source of all love and we praise you, we worship you, we adore you.

We offer afresh to you all the love of our heart, all of our soul and all of our strength.

We rejoice in the love that you have for us and in the delight that you find in us as we express our love for you. We are amazed at the love you have for us and thank you from the depths of our being for the freedom that gives us to enjoy being the people you have made us to be.

As we rejoice in your love for us help us to demonstrate the integrity of our love by loving our neighbours as ourselves.

May our love for you be as sincere on Monday morning as it is on Sunday morning. May our offering of heart, soul and mind be as complete in the home and workplace as it is at Communion.

God of love, we celebrate again the wonders of your love and pray that the worship and service we offer may truly be filled with your love.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

ALL: 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, the power, and the glory for ever.

Amen.

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: John 21:15-19 (NT page 1090)

Reader: Carol Coull

What is love?

The textverse for the sermon is verse ¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

The number three was a very important number because it confirmed that something really was true and that it was intentional. When Peter denied Jesus three times previously, it was really a profound event. He really meant it! But now Jesus gives him another opportunity, a second chance by asking him to confirm his love three times. And Jesus is also giving him options of how to show his love. Love is always followed by actions and if he really means it, he must show it through the actions of:

- feeding the "lambs" or the wee ones,
- taking care of the flock,
- feeding the "sheep" or those who are not lambs anymore,
- following Jesus,
- to be a living sacrifice in the name of Jesus.

It is interesting to note that Jesus uses his official full birth name Simon, Son of John, to emphasize the importance of the matter.

It is also interesting to see how the writer made use of the words for love in the Greek text. When he speaks of the love of Jesus, he uses twice the word *agape*. When Peter responds with his statement of love, he uses the word *philo*. Why? Because the Biblical writers made a distinction between the love that God has for human beings and the love of human beings towards God. But interestingly he changes the order of words for love in verse 17. In verse 17 he uses in both cases the word *philo*. My theory would be that Jesus was referring to his sacrifice on the cross. He suffered, although He was fully God, the death of a human being. He showed the love of a "human being" which explains the choice to use the word "philo" and not "agape". Jesus' love of course is sacrificial love, love that is costly!

And it corresponds with what Jesus said in verse 19 namely that Peter will eventually die a sacrificial death because of his faith.

So in a sense Jesus challenged not only Peter but all the rest of the disciples, you and me included? Do we love God and if we say: "Aye, How do we show our love that we have for God?".

Do we show it through our commitment of following Jesus in everything we do and say. Do we show it through:

- our actions of looking spiritually after our wee ones, the children and our youth or do we ignore them and wait for them to make their own choices, without us leading and guiding them properly?

- our actions of looking after one another, as brothers and sisters in faith, or do we ignore each other, gossip about one another and emphasize all our differences.
- Our actions of taking care of one another by ways of helping each other through sickness and health, through bereavements and suffering, through sunshine and rain, through thunder and stormy situations or do we just care for ourselves, or those who are important in the eyes of our society,
- Our actions of feeding others spiritually and physically, meaning doing charitable work in our everyday living.
- Our actions of following Jesus in everything we do, say or think,
- Our actions of sacrificial love, where "I" do not matter anymore but where the "we" or the "other" are more important than my own selfish nature,

Love is clearly not a feeling or a fleeting momentous emotion but a responsibility of action.

Today we are part of the love story of God. You and I are the players. God shows us his love through the sacraments, emphasising his sacrificial love through Holy communion and His intimate love through the baptism of a wee "bairn" in East Calder. In the love story of God, we have to and we can only respond to His love through our promise to follow Jesus with grateful hearts. We can only respond with our love through our actions of commitment, responsibility and the willingness to sacrifice the self.

May WE tell one another and remind one another about the old, old story of God's love or in the words of the famous hymn:

"Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love. Tell me the story simply, because I am weak and weary, and helpless and defiled. Tell me the story slowly, that I may take it in, of the wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin. Tell ME the story often, so that I remember. Tell ME the story softly, with earnest tones and remember that I AM the sinner whom Jesus came to save. Tell ME the story always, so that I know, in any time of trouble, God is a comforter to ME. Tell ME the same old story when I have cause to fear that this world's empty glory will cost ME dear. Yes, and when that world's glory is dawning on MY soul, Tell ME the old, old story: "Christ Jesus will make ME whole." AMEN.

Communion

Invitation

This is the table,
not of the Church, but of the Lord.
It is to be made ready
for those who love him
and who want to love him more
So, come, you who have much faith

and you who have little, you who have been here often
and you who have not been for a long time, you who have tried to follow
and you who have failed.

Come, not because it is I who invite you:
it is our Lord.

It is his will that those who want him should meet him here.

MSP 515

O love that wilt not let me go

The story of the sacrament of communion

Now let us hear the story
of how this sacrament began.

On the night on which Jesus was betrayed
he sat at supper with his disciples.
While they were eating, he took a piece of bread,
said a blessing,
broke it and gave it to them with the words,
'This is my body. It is broken for you.
Do this to remember me'

Later, he took a cup of wine, saying,
'This cup is God's new covenant,
sealed with my blood.
Drink from it, all of you, to remember me''

So now, following Jesus' example and command,
we take this bread and this wine,
the ordinary things of the world
which Christ will make special.
And as he said a prayer before sharing,
let us do so too.

Communion prayer

Gratitude, praise,
hearts lifted high,
voices full and joyful ...
these you deserve.

For when we were nothing,
you made us something.
When we had no name
and no faith and no future,
you called us your children.

When we lost our way or turned away,
you did not abandon us.
When we came back to you,
your arms opened wide in welcome.

And look,
you prepare a table for us
offering not just bread, not just wine,
but your very self
so that we may be filled, forgiven,
healed, blessed and made new again.
You are worth all our pain and all our praise.
So now, in gratitude,
we join our voices
to those of the Church on earth and in heaven as printed in the order
of service:

All: ***Holy, holy, holy lord,
God of power and might.
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the lord.
hosanna in the highest.***

Prayer of consecration

For us you were born,
for us you healed,
preached, taught
and showed the way to heaven;
for us you were crucified,
and for us, after death,
you rose again.

Lord Jesus Christ,
present with us now,
for all that you have done
and all that you have promised,
what have we to offer?

Our hands are empty
our hearts are sometimes full of wrong things.
we are not fit to gather up the crumbs
from under your table.

But with you is mercy
and the power to change us.

So as we do in this place
what you did in an upstairs room,
send down your Holy Spirit
on us and on these gifts of bread and wine
that they may become for us your body,
healing, forgiving and making us whole;
and that we may become,
for you,
your body,
loving and caring in the world
until your kingdom comes.
Amen

Taking and breaking the bread

(taking and breaking the bread)

Among friends, gathered round a table,
Jesus took bread, broke it and said,
"This is my body
it is broken for you."

(Taking the cup of wine)

And later he took the cup of wine and said,
"This is the new relationship with God,
made possible because of my death.
'Take this – all of you – to remember me.'"

Sharing the Peace

LAMB OF GOD
YOU TAKE AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD,
HAVE MERCY UPON US.

LAMB OF GOD,
YOU TAKE AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD,
GRANT US YOUR PEACE.

Let us share it with each other saying: "*The Peace of our Lord will be with you!*"

Responding to God's love

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MSP 33:1,3,5 "And can it be"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Frances Young

MP 689

Thine be the glory

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:
Sing a new song to the Lord, each and every day:
recognizing those in need; remembering those you love; recalling those
gone before.

Sing a new song to the Lord, at the end of each day:
confessing your sins; forgiving your debtors;
and expressing your thanksgiving.

And the blessing of God almighty,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Be with you - with all whom you love

and all whom you seek to love this day and for evermore"

Sung Amen