

Valentine's Day comes around but once a year. Certainly Hallmark has tried to add to the list of romantic holidays by adding Sweetest Day, but no other holiday holds the weight of Valentine's Day for those in a relationship or the romantic types among us. Guys pull out all the stops: flowers, candy, presents, trips. Boyfriends and girlfriends become fiancés, the list of what could be done, should be done, is expected is endless. But for all the attention that Valentine's Day get in regards to love, is that all there is to be said about love? What about the other 364 days out of year? Do we not love the same way on all those other days? Obviously we still love, but Valentines certainly seems to hold a share of that market.

For a different perspective on love and Valentine's Day we look at Christ and His bride: the Church. How does Christ show His love for us? What similarities or differences do we see? In regards to Valentine's Day and the big showy important day that it is in the realm of relationships and the showing of love, Christ does have one day which the church celebrates every year on which He shows His love to us. We call it: Good Friday. It may not come with all the mushy, lovey-dovey, romance that one attaches to Valentine's Day, but if we are to find a single day on which Christ unequivocally shows His love to His bride, it is the day He laid down His life for us. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends," Christ says in John 15:13. Obviously this is a very different love than merely sending flowers or a card, or some candies. This is the truth of God's love on which we build our faith: the mercy of God shown to us in Christ's blood shed for us.

In this one singular act Christ showed His love for fallen creation and sought to cleanse her to be His bride; so what about the rest of the time? Just like in a relationship where love exists and is hopefully evident throughout the whole year and whole relationship, God's love to us is evident as well. He comes to us daily as we remember our baptism. When we recall those blessed waters we are reminded of the love He showed to us on the cross and Christ's blood with which we are washed. Even as we recall our sins and our short comings we are pointed routinely to God's mercy in Christ and His forgiveness is close at hand.

But the ways in which God shows His love to us is not limited merely to the big or obvious sign of His love. God's love is not limited to simply dying for us, but extends to every day of our lives as He provides for us in every aspect, and in every way. "All this He does out of Fatherly divine goodness and mercy without any merit or worthiness in me." He loves us and shows His love to us, BECAUSE HE LOVES US. God's love is unique in that it is perfect, it is unending, and undeserved. His love is what we seek to emulate in our relationships and what we go back to when we fail. His love far exceeds our human perspective and thankfully so, because it is by love that we are saved (by His wounds we are healed.)

For a further perspective on this idea of love that we seek to emulate and somewhat inspired by the fact that it is February I have decided to focus on love and relationships starting February 6th and running through the rest of the month. My hope is to help apply the love of Christ to our relationships in way that are meaningful and productive. I also would like to speak to some of the differences in God's design of us as man and woman to acknowledge and help make regular sense of the more quirky or frustrating aspects of the opposite sex. Marriage communication and relationship dynamics are extremely important to me. I've been through my share of learning in the my 12 years of marriage, little of which I felt came with the handbook that I never remember getting that was supposed to explain all of this, and so I feel that this is a healthy thing for any couple, whether to better understand each other, ratify what has been working for years, or simply to be of strength and help to those on the journey. I hope to see all of you husband and wives on Wednesday evenings in February.

Blessings on your month,

Pastor Nick