

The Lakeview Lamp

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." - Psalm 119:105

February 11, 2007

Unexpected Love

David Diestelkamp

"Love is..." The unending quest of romantics, philosophers, and songwriters is to try to adequately finish that sentence. Each of us probably has an idealized picture of love; people, places, and things all coming together in a perfect, indescribable moment. And while we know that, in reality, love is not always running through a field of daisies toward the person of our dreams, romantic visions tend to dance in our heads when real love is what we desire and look for.

Now think for a moment about injustice, terrible loss, and suffering pain and death. With this picture any thoughts of love we were having probably evaporated. Where did all those thoughts of love go? Well, unfair judgments at a trial, the loss of one's possessions, abandonment, pain, and death are not remotely a part of anyone's love story – but they are part of God's!

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us" (1 Jn. 3:16). Love is not defined by butterfly feelings in our stomachs, but by the scourging, the loneliness, the physical agony, and blood of Christ who died for us. We would like a prettier picture of His love for us – with Him at sunset, hand in hand on a hilltop, calm, picturesque, warm, fuzzy, and nice; but these are not how ultimate love shows itself.

The truth is that the application of love is often quite ugly. Love that sticks around only for romance or pleasure is no more than fantasy or lust. Of Christ, Isaiah prophesied, *"He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53:2).* Oh, the religious world has managed to clean Him up for marketing purposes, but that's not the Messiah revealed in Scripture. For us, He was *"despised and rejected a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).* He was wounded and bruised, oppressed and afflicted, taken from prison and judgment (*Isa. 53:5, 7, 8*). He sweat in agony for us, was beaten, spat on, stripped and then crucified – hands and feet pierced (*Psa. 22:16*) – for us.

Then, for us, He endured the pain and humiliation on the cross for six hours; then He gave up His spirit into His Father's hands. So, can there be any doubt? *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).*

Now here is an interesting twist to God's love story: *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12).* In other words, we are to do more than acknowledge and thankfully benefit from God's love, we are to emulate it in our dealings with others. We tend to be willing to do this until application turns ugly and distasteful. It is actually at this point that we have the opportunity to demonstrate true godliness, loving like God loves.

If we find it more difficult to love our brother than to love God, it is because we are loving like the world. In the words of Jesus: *"But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same" (Lk. 6:32).* God loves us. In fact, He loved us first (*1 Jn. 4:19*) and when we weren't loveable (*Col. 1:21-22*). He forgives us, is good to us, blesses us, and promises us a home with Him for eternity.

Loving someone like this doesn't take much. But loving our brother is quite another matter. Our brother isn't perfect. He doesn't always love us first, he doesn't always forgive, do good, bless, or fulfill his promises. In our anger and disappointment we use his offenses not to love him, while still claiming to love our good God. God says to us: *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also"* (1 Jn. 4:20-21).

There is a very strong temptation for us to try to excuse hatred based on what a person does. They lied, they cheated, they stole. At times like this, words like injustice, terrible loss, suffering pain and death ought to echo in our ears.

Those are what we required of the love of Jesus – He endured it and then said, *"Love one another as I have loved you"* (Jn 15:12). We don't love others this way as payback or even to try to change them, but because it is what love is, it is what God is, and what we desire to be as well.

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Lk. 6:27) must become more real to us. Jesus was not just talking about some threatening foreign nation or someone we simply fear. He commands us to love those who actually touch our lives with pain and even violence. They hate us, slander us, rob us, humiliate us, inflict emotional and physical pain, and kill us – yet, like God, we are to respond only in love.

When the application of love becomes difficult, even ugly, we are tempted to excuse our hatred by saying, "I'm only human." Of course, that's not accurate; we are created in the image of God and therefore able to understand and choose to imitate His characteristics. Often saying, "I'm only human" is our way of really saying, "I'm going to do what my carnal, human, side desires," or "I'm going to act like the world in this situation."

Jesus said that it would be our love for each other that would tell the world that we are His disciples (Jn. 13:35). Not simply loving the lovable, but loving, forgiving, and blessing, when the world would not, says we are not of the world, but of God. Jesus said, "Love like this," and then died for us. Refusal to do so, no matter who it is or what they have done, is to not know God (1 Jn. 4:8).

*"Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord
our Maker." – Psalm 95:6*

Family News

Sandra Boyd is scheduled this week to have a walking boot put on.

Mary Burnett had a bad night Friday night but was better yesterday.

Quinton Coppage had a bad fall two weeks ago. He remains at home.

Metty Fain is in Room B2, 215 Highland Circle Dr, Portland TN 37148.

Elmo Ferrell is doing pretty well.

Barry Fultz had major surgery five weeks ago. He is now at home. Overall, he is not doing too well. He had a headache for a long time but it finally went away on Friday. He continues to rest. This is to help him heal. He has not yet recovered enough to begin physical therapy. You can keep up with his progress and send messages to the Fultzs at: caringbridge.org/visit/nathanandsandlyn

Remember **Sandra Hunt** who is in a great amount of pain.

Candy & Robert Jenkins were both sick this past week.

Fran Pickens had five teeth removed. One of them required surgery.

Cotton & Nancy Read are both doing some better.

Laura Reed broke her arm six weeks ago. It is healing well.

Dustin Simpson, who used to attend here, was involved in a serious motorcycle accident a few weeks ago. He had surgery on Wednesday. It went well and he continues to recover.

Georgia Taylor is in Christian Care Center of Cheatham Co. They are doing some therapy. Address: 2501 River Road, Ashland City TN 37015

Ame White had a bad week. She saw a neurosurgeon on Friday. She was put on new pain medicine. She is to receive a back brace this Wednesday. Later, she will have an MIR and CAT scan.

Randy Williams was sick this past week.

Robert Wray is about the same.

New Reports: No new reports.

Out of town, travelling, or visiting: **Ken & Rhonda Hull** (in CA).

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"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).