

Sermon Title: Live Love

Text: Matthew 5:17-37

By: Rev. Terry Carty

Date: 02-13-11

Place: Kingston Springs United Methodist Church

Season: Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, Day before Valentines Day,
Music Recognition Day

Message: Live Love - Let our relationships grow deeper by experiencing higher love that is built on relationship, human dignity, respectfulness and trust.



With Valentine's Day coming tomorrow, I have been thinking about love. First in my mind was, of course, my wife, Anne. *"Meeting you was fate, becoming your friend was choice, falling in love with you was a gift from God."*

I have also been thinking about my love for my children, and my parents, and my wife's parents, brothers, sisters... But also I have been thinking about the love that I have for some of my friends who have been friends for a long time. *"It takes a long time to make old friends."* And I have been thinking about the love that I have for some newer friends, especially the friends that this congregation has become so quickly for Anne and me.

Today's scripture passage sounds like anything but thoughts of love and Valentines. But stay with me a few minutes and I think that I can make the point that these words of Christ are exactly about loving.



When we last visited with Jesus he had gone to a mountainside to teach. He started by grounding his teaching using the Beatitudes – He says to choose the life that God blesses. Today we move deeper into the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus begins to explain that he did not come to abolish the Hebrew laws and prophecies, but to fulfill them. Jesus proceeds to coach the people about how to 'live the love' that God blesses.

READ MATTHEW 5:17-37 stopping to make these comments

Matt 5:21-26 Concerning Anger

It is useless to debate which killing may or may not be legitimate. Jesus instead warns of unresolved anger between brothers and sisters...between friends. Jesus calls us to reconcile our differences. This type of reconciliation and his mention of a brother or sister suggests that Jesus is talking about the type of love that the Greeks know as *Philos* – the love of family members or of friends. This is a higher order of love than *Eros* – the lusty love of physical attraction.

Matt 27-30 Concerning Adultery

Here Jesus addresses the dangers the lowest order of love, *Eros*. This life lesson is not really about immorality. It is more about letting lust for something that belongs to another cause someone to lose sight of human dignity and respect.

Matt 5:31-32 Concerning Divorce

The word translated here as ‘unchastity’ was a very broad term. Again, Jesus is not speaking of adultery as much as he is speaking of the codes of his time that consider women and children as property to be owned by men. By Hebrew law the man could simply write out a letter of divorce to end a marriage. Jesus teaches that marriage is a relationship, and that a woman should be treated with respect.

Matt 5:33-37 Concerning Oaths

This text refers to honesty in the full range of human relationships. We are to be truth-tellers at all times. No one should feel it necessary to “swear us in.” Yes means yes, and no means no.

So Jesus is actually teaching about how to ‘live the love’ that God blesses. God calls us to follow the model of Christ – Live Love. Let our relationships grow deeper by experiencing higher love that is built on relationship, human dignity, respectfulness and trust.



Saint Valentine was not one person, but of several who were martyred saints of ancient Rome. The Catholic feast of St. Valentine was first established in 496 honoring all these martyrs named Valentine, but nothing was known even then about their lives. The first story of St Valentine accompanied a woodcut portrait of Valentine in 1493. The text describes him as a priest who was arrested and imprisoned when he was caught marrying Christian couples and otherwise aiding Christians. He was executed and buried near Rome on February 14.

Many of the current legends that characterize Saint Valentine were invented in 14th Century England by Geoffrey Chaucer and his circle. That was when the feast day of February 14 first became associated with romantic love.

in current times we commemorate Valentine’s Day by celebrating love and affection not only in dating and marital relationships, but also in friendships.

I invite you to reflect today on tomorrow’s celebration of love and affection AND on Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount related to relationship, human dignity, respectfulness and trust. This is our call to Live Love. Make it your call to live love in your most important relationships – wife, children, family, close friends – all qualify as your Valentines.

I end today with a Valentine wish. As I read this, think of who the Valentines are in your life:

*Valentine's Day gives me a reason
to express the feelings
I think about but don't say
about people who enrich my life
in unique and meaningful ways.*

*You are this kind of special person.
When I think of you
my thoughts are warm, and fond,
and filled with admiration.
I feel blessed to know you.*

*May your Valentine Day
be filled with the love and respect you deserve.
(by Joanna Fuchs)*



Prayer: God, give us Valentines in our lives like this. And help us to Live Love so that others will find us to be the same kind of Valentine. Amen.