

All you need is LOVE
John 13:31-35

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When I was in 4th grade, 1967, the Beatles filled the air waves of our radio stations with their hit single - "All you need is love." That year, a new music teacher showed up at my grammar school to teach my class Solfege - a way of teaching children to read and understand music by using hand signs. She got annoyed with the class one day because we were so bored with the music we were signing. For her next class, she taught us to use our Solfege signs as we sang, "All you need is love." A year or so later, I was in my church school class and we were studying Jesus' great commandment - Love one another as I have loved you. After the teacher talked with us about the passage someone called out: "Hey, but that's what the Beatles sing!"

Our scripture reading this morning is the very heart of the Jesus' teaching. We find it in the middle of the Gospel of John, at the end of the 13th chapter. In this chapter, Jesus is teaching his disciples the wisdom he wants to share so they will understand the love God has for all people. It is also the chapter where Jesus washes his disciples' feet and tells them to learn by his example. During the Passover meal that they share, Jesus speaks of his betrayal and death. In our passage, he explains that God has glorified him and God has been glorified in Jesus. He continues by saying that his disciples cannot follow him, but if they love others like he has loved them, they will be known as his disciples. They will be the beacons of God's love in the world.

One of the beautiful things about the Gospel of John is the language of the intertwining of God and Jesus and Jesus and his disciples. Our passage says - God has been gloried in Jesus, Jesus is gloried in God and the disciples are commissioned to carry Jesus' love and glory into the world. There is this great ONENESS of God's intertwining with Jesus and God's intertwining with us - that intertwining is experienced through love. It is the very foundation of love.

Our passage teaches us to care for others through love.

A few weeks ago, Bob and I took my mother to a show at the Bushnell, "Come from Away." It is a musical that tells the true story about the experience people had when 38 planes were forced to land in Gander, Newfoundland on September 11, 2001. After hours stuck on grounded planes, authorities realized they needed to let the people off the planes and find places for them to sleep. The

residents of Gander put together resources that were needed at schools, old camp groups, and places of worship to house and feed their visitors. On the first night, when a group of people were being bused to their housing in the pitch black, the local person guiding the group realized that the travelers who didn't understand English were terrified. They had no idea where they were going. When the bus arrived at a campground, an African couple refused to get off – clearly afraid of what might happen. The local guide noticed that the woman was holding a bible, so he showed her a passage from St. Paul that says: “Do not be afraid.” They didn't share a spoken language – but they shared the language of God – the language of love. The woman and her family got off the bus knowing they would be safe.

Our passage also teaches us that we can be people who love because God loves us.

A few weeks ago, I was with a minister from the Pentecostal tradition. She is perhaps one of the most spirit-filled people I have ever met. Being raised in the Pentecostal church, she was taught the language of the Holy Spirit at an early age. She listens for God's message, given by the Holy Spirit, for guidance and understanding in her life. Over time, she's created a remarkable ministry for people with Aids, the homeless and addicts. She is at a threshold in her life as she begins a new ministry, but has moments of being unsure of her future as she begins this new venture. One day, a dear friend of hers called and said: “I need to talk to you right now! I have had a message from God. The Spirit has told me that you need to know that God is FASCINATED by you!” God is fascinated by you!

This is what our scripture is teaching us today – God is fascinated with us. God sent Jesus to spread God's love in the world. God poured God's self into the world through Jesus so that we might know God's yearning for us to love others. But we're not alone in our efforts to find common language with others, as we care for each other. We are people who love to be because God is FASCINATED with us. That God energy empowers us to live. All we need is love.

Amen.

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