

## *Making the World Go 'Round*

1 John 5:1-5

John 15:9-17

### ***1 John 5:1-5 (The Message):***

***Every person who believes that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, is God-begotten. If we love the One who conceives the child, we'll surely love the child who was conceived. The reality test on whether or not we love God's children is this: Do we love God? Do we keep his commands? The proof that we love God comes when we keep his commandments and they are not at all troublesome. Every God-begotten person conquers the world's ways. The conquering power that brings the world to its knees is our faith. The person who wins out over the world's ways is simply the one who believes Jesus is the Son of God.***

*Money money money money money money money money. Money makes the world go around, the world go around, the world. Money makes the world go around, it makes the world go round. It makes the world go round. At least, that's what we've been taught to believe. Which may be why we are so deeply distressed and anxious during this economic recession, when it becomes pretty clear that if we believe that, we are desperately in trouble.*

*But I have another song for you. It's an oldie, but a goodie. You know, love makes the world go round. Oh yeah, love makes the world go up and down.*

And that's the song I'm going with. Because today, we read from the writings of John... a rather cryptic and unusual insight into the meaning of Jesus that provides a particular perspective on what indeed makes the world go round. I've already read to you from the first letter of John, which says that the proof we are God's children rests in this test: Do you love God? Do you keep his commands? .... What are his commands, you may well ask? Jesus tells us, according to the Gospel of John 15:9-17:

***John 15:9-17 (The Message):***

***I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love. That's what I've done—kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love. I've told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. You are my friends when you do the things I command you. I'm no longer calling you servants because servants don't understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, I've named you friends because I've let you in on everything I've heard from the Father. You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you. But remember the root command: Love one another.***

That's the command. It's that simple. And it's that difficult. Love one another.

It does seem a bit perplexing that Jesus commands us to love each other. How do you command someone to love someone else? It somehow reminds me of all those well-intentioned parental directions that don't really work: We are going to the museum today and you will have fun. You will eat your spinach and you will like it! Be nice to you sister, or I'll knock your silly heads together! I used to hear that a lot when I was growing up!...  
hmmm....

Anyone who's done marriage counseling knows you simply can't mandate love - as you look at the couple in front of you with their arms folded and steam coming out their ears and body language that is straight out of kung fu class - while you try to tell them "Love each other!" you realize just can't command that kind of thing.

But Jesus does. Love one another. As I have loved you. While the other gospels exhort disciples to love their neighbors or even their enemies, John's Gospel calls those within the church to "love one another." This is what's going to let people know that you are my disciples - if you have love for one another. That's the only witness you've got that makes any difference. If you have love for one another. That's the crux of the message. The crux of the message - the cross of the message. The place where the divine intersects with the mundane—the place where God invades our reality ... in love. Jesus knew you can't mandate a feeling. It's not some warm, gooey center that melts away in the heat. It's not a feeling at all. It's something you do. It's a love so costly that is ready to go to extreme lengths... to put one's life on the line for one's friends. That's what Jesus is asking. Love like I do. That's all. Love each other like that.

I've thought a lot lately about this crazy world we live in. I've thought a lot about how strangely screwed up it is. I've thought a lot about the headlines that demonstrate that what we yearn for—what the world yearns for—is just this thing: a place to be loved. A place to belong. A place to learn how to love in a way that makes a difference. That matters. That provides purpose ... and meaning... and challenge... and sanctuary.

That's the church. That's the role of the church today. That's why you're here. The early gatherings of Christian disciples had a word for it: *koinonia*. It's often translated as fellowship, but that word today does not carry the same depth of meaning that *koinonia* does.

Koinonia is what happens when people come together to truly open themselves to one another—to bring their hearts and their talents to work together, to pool their material and human resources to make things happen, to practice a radical comm-unity that in truth means something closer to comm-union.

In learning to love one another in very practical and concrete ways—in actions more than words—the disciples learned how to go forth into the world and love others in ways that mattered, that had an impact, that revealed the very practical difference that knowing Jesus made in their lives. It was then and it is now a real alternative to the ways of the world. It's an economy that is based not on money, but on love.

That's the invitation to you this morning. To be the conduit, to become part of the pipeline that passes on the love that the Father has for the Son, the love that the Son has for you, the love that you are called to share with others... a practical, generous, joyful, liberating, life-giving love. When we become disciples of Christ, we join in the pipeline—we too become conduits of God's love into the world, partners in the divine mission. Such love keeps the spirit of Jesus alive in the world, for as long as Christian love is in the world, the world is still encountering Jesus.

And that, my friends, is what makes the world go 'round.