

Acts 10:44-48
Psalm 98
1 John 5:1-6
John 15:9-17

Sermon May 9th, 2021

Jesus Empowers Us with His Love

In High School I dated a person for a short period of time who wasn't very nice. We would be sitting in the food court at West Edmonton Mall hanging out with her friends. I remember spending the bulk of my time there listening to her say nasty things about the people that walked by. This shouldn't have surprised me at all. The day we met, we were at a youth group event, and she spent the whole time criticizing every person who attended the event. However, I was attracted to her physically, and with her being my first girlfriend in high school, I was blinded by the love goggles. Just a little bit.

Reality finally set in for me when she decided for the first time to drive across the city to meet my family. Before this day, I was the one getting on three buses to meet up with her everyday. Anyways, she spent the majority of the time putting down my dog of all things (**Image: of a dog being scolded**). Let's just say she was a cat person.

For the whole time we were dating I witnessed this abusive behaviour, and yet, it took me way too long to finally end the relationship.

What I noticed the most in myself when I was dating her is that I didn't really like the person I was becoming. After a while, I reacted to her comments with sarcasm and rudeness. I started to see people in a negative light that I didn't see in this way before. I was angry all the time. I was turning into the worst part of myself.

Fast forward to my time working at Save On Foods, and I met two people who were the complete opposite of my first girl friend. They had nothing but nice things to say about others. Including the customers that at times could be frustrating to deal with (**Image: Of someone offering friendly customer service**). They carried with them such a positive vibe. They were very welcoming, and not judgmental in the least. They genuinely loved people, and this love seemed to move me to be a better person. I found myself being less critical of others, and more loving to people I encountered. If I remember correctly, the whole staff were more friendly when those two were working. I really give thanks that I had a chance to get to know these two co-workers. They really helped me grow into a healthier and more friendly person.

We come across many people in our lives. Some that seem to impact us in negative ways, and others, who bring out the best in us. Sometimes the abusive relationships we find ourselves in can drag on and on. Sometimes the relationships where we experience genuine love are short lived. Whatever the time frame is though, what I

have found in my life is that when I have experienced genuine love from someone, I have been inspired by this love to be a better person. To live loving others with this same genuineness.

In Jesus' parting words to his disciples, Jesus wants to reiterate that Jesus' love for us is genuine. Unconditional. Jesus no longer calls us servant but friend. Jesus will even give up his life for us.

Throughout Jesus' ministry we see that Jesus' love for us is genuine. From healing our mind, body, and soul with the touch of his hand/robe. To forgiving us when everyone else wants to throw stones at us. From feeding us when stranded on a beach. To calming our anxieties in the midst of the storm. From meeting us at a well in the scorching heat, and listening to us when no one else will. To welcoming us despite our race or gender or profession or social standing or our sometimes-sinful behaviour (**Image: Of Jesus welcoming someone**). Jesus comes into our lives, and reveals to us what God's love looks like.

Because, in Jesus' time, and even in our time still, many people have this negative view of God. They feel that God is out to punish us whenever we mess up or that God is very exclusive in nature. God will only accept certain people who believe and behave in specific ways. Some see God as the overbearing parent. Others see God as the neglectful parent. When we see God in these negative ways we are often impacted by these beliefs in negative ways. Kind of like when we find ourselves in an abusive relationship.

We tend to make decisions out of fear instead of out of hope. We tend to become more judgmental towards others instead of being more gracious (**Image: Of a judge with their mallet**). We end up lashing out in a rebellious nature instead of listening to God's guidance for our lives.

Jesus challenges us to see God in the way God intended us to see God. As a merciful and loving God who cares more about building us up than tearing us down. A God who wants to get the best out of us. Not our worst. A God who is hospitable and present. A God who heals us and redeems us from our suffering. A God who wants to be in relationship with us. A God who wants to be our friend (**Image: of a friendship**). This is the God Jesus talks about. This is the God Jesus reveals to us.

A God who inspires us to be people who love one another genuinely. Jesus hopes that through his love for the disciples, that they will be impacted by this love to continue to reveal God's love to others. Jesus hopes that through his love for us, that we will feel empowered by his love, to walk in Jesus' footsteps. Loving others in healing ways. Loving others in redeeming ways. Loving others in caring ways. Loving others in forgiving and hospitable ways.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks for the people in our lives like your Son who love us genuinely. Whom inspire us to love others genuinely. Healing, redeeming, caring, forgiving, and welcoming those we meet. **Amen.**

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