

Love is Worth the Risk

Scripture: Isaiah 46:3 – 10 and John 21:15 – 20

Lent #3 – 3/12/23

A man shared this in a Bible Study class – A friend of his had ended a decade long friendship with him without any explanation. It seems that the man who had lost the friend had started to slip back into his old habit of keeping people at arm's length. While he was processing his loss and grief, he pulled a tattered copy of C.S. Lewis's book entitled – 'The Four Loves'. In the book, Lewis makes a powerful observation about love. Love requires us to become vulnerable. Vulnerability is required to love someone. Lewis states that there is no safe investment when a person risks loving someone else. Lewis suggests that love is something that will lead your heart to be possibly broken.

When the man finished sharing, he started crying. He continued to share how reading this had changed his life. He finished his sharing by telling the group that he had patched up with his friend and things are much better now.

Love requires vulnerability!

In our scripture reading from the Gospel of John, we have Jesus' third visit with the disciples after his resurrection. This is after Peter had betrayed him, not once but three times!

Jesus said '*Peter, son of John, do you love me?*' Peter said 'YES!' and Jesus said '*Feed my sheep!*' A second time Jesus asked Peter '*Simon Peter, do you love me?*' Peter said 'YES!' again and Jesus said '*Feed my sheep!*' A third time Jesus asked Peter '*Peter, do you love me?*' Peter felt hurt because Jesus had asked him three times if he love him. Peter said to Jesus 'Lord, you know everything and you know I love you!' Jesus said '*Feed my sheep!*'

Then comes these wonderful words from Jesus '*Very truly, I tell you when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go*

wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will fasten your belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' Jesus said this to Peter to indicate what kind of death will happen to him to glorify God. Jesus then said *'Follow me!'*

After experiencing the sting of betrayals and rejections, Jesus spoke to Peter with courage, not fear; with strength, not weakness; with selflessness, not desperation. Jesus displayed mercy, not wrath by confirming his willingness to love!

It does say that Peter was hurt by the repeated asking of him if he loved Jesus, but when Jesus asked Peter to prove his love for him by loving others and following him, Jesus invited all his disciples to risk loving unconditionally.

Each of us will have to answer when Jesus asks *'Do you love me?'* Our answer will impact how we love others.

A couple of great questions to end this part of my message: Why would a loving God ask his beloved children to risk being hurt for the sake of loving others like Jesus did? And how can an intimate relationship with God help us feel safe enough to risk loving?

Sometimes when a Labrador retriever wants attention, he will take something of his master and parade around in front of his master with this thing. One morning the master was writing at his desk when he noticed his Lab had snatched up his wallet and he was parading around with it in his mouth. His dog's eyes were lit up and his tail was wagging. He was taunting his master to chase and play with him.

The dog's antics made his master laugh out loud but it also reminded him of our limitations when it comes to being attentive to others.

So often we intended to spend time with family and friends but other things come up and occupy our time and awareness. Does this often happen to you?

In our scripture reading from the Book of Isaiah, we can take comfort in knowing that our Heavenly Father is so great that he is able to

attend to each of us in the intimate ways. God sustains every breath in our bodies for as long as we live. God promises his people that even in old age and with gray hairs he is there. He is able to sustain us. He has made us and will carry us forward!

God always has time for us. He understands every detail of our circumstances, no matter how complex or difficult they are. He is there whenever we call on him in prayer. We never have to wait in line for our Savior's unlimited love.

Praying to God is not like Disney World where you wait in line, sometimes a very long line. Jesus' love is available if we pray!

Love requires vulnerability and our God has that vulnerability!

Your first challenge of Lent was to reconcile with someone during this season of Lent. Your second challenge was to commit yourself to pray one or two or three extra times each day during the season of Lent. And now your third challenge is to take some time to write a letter to someone your love and sharing your love with them. Just one person is all I am challenging you to do. If you wish to write to more than one person – GREAT!

Yes, I want you to use 'snail mail' to do this. Writing a note to someone is a lost art in our society. Let us use this art of writing a message of love to someone during this season of Lent.

Remember 'Love is worth the risk'!

Let us pray:

Loving God, please break down every wall that keeps us from being vulnerable so we can love you and others with the spirit empowering us with courage, compassion, and consistency.

You always have time for us, let us have time for you. Help us to live every moment for you. AMEN.