

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

MAY 6 - 10, 2019

UNCOMMON

love

SERMON SERIES

April 28 - May 26

MONDAY

Luke 15:11-32; 1 Corinthians 13:7-8

Prodigal Father's Love

“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7, ESV). Love never quits, never stops, never runs out.

What other passages in the Scriptures speak of love? What Bible stories illustrate love?

One love story is the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” as told by Jesus and recorded by Luke. In the story the father of two sons bears the shame of his younger son requesting his inheritance ahead of time. Not only did he dishonor his father, some would say he wished him dead. Despite his younger son’s foolish decision-making, his wasted life, and his wasted resources, the father never stopped loving him.

The prodigal’s father endured all that and hoped for a good outcome—the return of his lost son. He believed it to such an extent that he was on the lookout for his son’s return. The story says the son “came to his senses” while in a far country, after all other options were used up. No doubt the father was praying. When his son was still a long way off, the father spotted him coming and ran to meet him. He embraced him, wept on his shoulder, and celebrated his return with a festive party.

Who of us have had someone love us like that? My mother prayed and wept through the night (or nights) for me as I was growing up, I am told. She endured weeping for a night, but joy came in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

My friend Segbe was born with bent legs into a West African culture of dancing. He became the village drummer and our language consultant. Upon reading this “Parable of the Prodigal Son,” he said, “If God is like the prodigal son’s father, I would be interested.”

QUESTIONS

Have you known someone who loves like the prodigal son’s father, like our Heavenly Father?

PRAYERS FOR MATI AND JULIE GALI

Pray for Mati and Julie Gali, who work with Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in northeast Brazil. There are boys’ and girls’ homes for homeless children, a Christian school for over 200 children from the surrounding slums, and a training program for staff who work with children and community development.

TUESDAY

Hosea 3; 1 Corinthians 13:7-8

Hosea's Love

In case we are tempted to think God's love is not extreme, the Bible has a story of the prophet Hosea and Gomer, his wife and the mother of his three children. It's not easy to be a prophet, but it also wasn't easy being married to Gomer.

Gomer chased after other men to the point that no man would have her, and she was put up for auction. And who would be the highest bidder? Who would rescue her from a life of prostitution and debauchery? Who would love Gomer to that extent? Hosea would.

Hosea's love for Gomer was unrequited. Being the wife to a prophet apparently wasn't what Gomer signed up for. She was unfaithful to Hosea.

Another story is told of a boy who lost the model boat he had crafted so carefully. The lake's waves swallowed up his boat and carried it away. The boy was heartbroken with no thought of recovering it. However, a fisherman found it tangled in his nets and sold it to a store owner. One day the boy chanced to see his boat in the store window. "Hey, that's my boat," he told the shopkeeper. "Sorry. However, it is for sale," replied the shopkeeper. The boy slowly saved up his money, and, overjoyed, he bought his boat, saying, "Now you're twice mine. First

I made you and now I've bought you." (Kent Hughes)

God told His prophet Hosea that His nation Israel was treating Him in the same way that Gomer was treating Hosea. Israel was unfaithful to God by going after other gods—gods who did not love her and only used her. Are we not in the same boat—needing to be redeemed by God who made us in the first place? From stories like Hosea and Gomer, we know God loves us and He loves through us like that.

QUESTIONS

Maybe you are faced with impossible challenges. Who do you know who is persevering in love through the toughest of situations?

PRAYERS FOR MATI AND JULIE GALI

Pray for more staff for Casa Sarah and Casa Esperanza (boys' and girls' homes) to help the children who have come from horrible situations to live in a Christian environment with love and nurturing.

WEDNESDAY

Romans 5:8; Ephesians 3:17-18

Jesus' Love Part One

Paul says, *"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

He also prayed that the church of Ephesus *"may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ"* (Ephesians 3:18).

On December 23, 2018, Pastor Tim preached that Jesus and his Father have a mutual love for each other. (Peck) This love opens a window on the love among the Father and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is essential to the idea of love. Darrell Johnson says, "At the heart of the Trinity is love." Augustine said, "The essence of the Godhead is love." There almost seems to be a shyness in deference to one another among the Trinity—a perfect love that has existed from eternity past.

Love is the reason God sent His Son to earth (John 3:16). Jesus loves us just as Father God loves Him (John 15:9). Jesus came to share this same love—to invite us into fellowship with the Trinity and with one another (1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 13:14). At His core, Jesus is motivated by love (Peck).

It is hard for us to imagine God's thought process, but it is borne out of love. Jesus took on the assignment of being incarnated into our helpless, hopeless, sin-sick world to redeem it by his death and resurrection—this is beyond our comprehension. Therefore, we dare not take it for granted.

The lengths to which Jesus went in order to redeem us are the epitome of love. He followed through for us. He is still following through today.

QUESTIONS

How do you see God's love working in and through your life?

PRAYERS FOR MATI AND JULIE GALI

Pray for Mateus, a nine-year-old boy who suffered tremendous abuse before coming to YWAM. He is slowly adjusting to school and needs continued restoration and healing from the emotional and physical wounds he suffered.

THURSDAY

1 John 4:18; Ephesians 4:13-16

Jesus' Love Part Two

God's love is beyond amazing. Still, some struggle with faith. Maybe they cannot believe the Bible is the Word of God. For others, it is more personal. They ask, "I believe in the Bible and that God loved the world, but does He love me? Am I included?"

The four Gospels tell us that Jesus loved individual people. He loved the Apostle John (which is written by John himself in John 20:2 and repeated 6 times in his Gospel). Jesus loved Lazarus (John 11:3) and his sisters (John 11:5). Jesus loved the rich young ruler (Mark 10:21). Again, the question is: "How can I know that Jesus loves me?"

In 1 John 4:18 (Living Bible) John says: *"We need have no fear of someone who loves us perfectly; His perfect love for us eliminates all dread of what He might do to us. If we are afraid, it is for fear of what He might do to us and shows that we are not fully convinced that He really loves us."*

I am of the belief that faith is not a choice but a gift (Ephesians 2:8-9). But there are choices we can make that lead to faith in His love for us. For example, we can choose to seek, and Jesus promises that seekers will be rewarded with finding (Matthew 7:8; Jeremiah 29:13; Hebrews 11:6). We can choose to put Jesus' words

into practice, and Jesus promises our lives will survive the inevitable storms that are bound to come (Matthew 7:24). We can come to Jesus as best we know how, and if we ask how to come to Him, He promises to show us how. He promises to never turn aside those who come to Him (John 6:37; Revelation 22:17). We can choose to follow Jesus.

Once Jesus begins a good work in us, Jesus' love follows through to the completion of our growth into the full stature of His purpose in us (Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 13:7-8; Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 4:13-16).

QUESTIONS

How can a person be fully convinced that Jesus really loves him or her?

PRAYERS FOR MATI AND JULIE GALI

Pray for the campus in Recife, which is in the process of building a training center for many schools and the community to use each year. The construction is about 50% complete and needs additional funding to be completed.



FRIDAY

Luke 10:25-37

Samaritan Traveler's Neighborly Love

"SELF-GIVING IS THE SECRET" is one of the phrases written on the right sanctuary wall of Glenkirk Church. It is also the answer Jesus gave to the lawyer who asked for the secret of eternal life in today's text. Jesus replied with the question: *"What is your reading of the law (Torah)?"* The lawyer answered: *"To keep God's commandments, the greatest being to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves."* "Yes," Jesus replied. *"Do that and you shall live."* The lawyer responded, *"But who is my neighbor?"* (Luke 10:26-29).

This question led to Jesus telling the story of a Samaritan traveler who was coming along the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. He came across a stranger who had been beaten and robbed. Unlike two previous passers-by, the Samaritan ministered to the man and carried him to an inn on his donkey. He paid for the man's lodging saying, *"Put any additional expenses to my account, and I will pay them next time I pass through"* (Luke 10:35).

Jesus asked, *"Which of these three passers-by acted as his neighbor?"* The expert of the law said, *"The one who had mercy on him."* "Yes," said Jesus. *"Go and do likewise"* (Luke 10:36-37). Jesus says the

same to us. And we can be a good neighbor to people because “the love of God has been poured out on us by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5).

A more recent and more local story occurred in the early 1990s in Boyle Heights of Los Angeles, a neighborhood besieged by fighting among eight rival gangs. A group of women met for prayer at the Dolores Mission Catholic Church, and one lady read the stories of Jesus walking on water and calming the storm. She began to identify the parallels between the Jesus stories and their own. “The gang warfare ... was the storm on the Sea of Galilee; the people hiding behind locked doors were the disciples huddled in the storm.” (David Augsburger)

“That night seventy women began a *peregrinacion*, a procession from one barrio to another. They brought food, guitars and love.” The women called their journeys “love walks.” Peace came, and over time the neighborhoods were transformed (Augsburger)

These stories tell of the courage that love inspires. We can be loving neighbors like them because, as it is written on the same wall of Glenkirk Church, “THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS.”

PRAYERS FOR MATI AND JULIE GALI

Pray for the families of the children attending the Christian school. The children are being transformed by a loving education founded in Christ, and it is making an impact on their families. Broken families are healing, but there are many who need God to change their lives.

Sources

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- Johnson, Darrell W. *Experiencing the Trinity*. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing 2002, 21.
- Peck, Pastor Tim. “Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love.” Sermon Series on Uncommon Love at Glenkirk Church, December 23, 2018.
- Augsburg, David. *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*. Grand Rapids: Brazo Press, 2006, 126.

