

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
September 30, 2018

JESUS, BE THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE FAMILY CHURCH Ephesians 3:13-21

What is "lifeblood"? It's the reason St. Paul's hosts a neighborhood blood drive. You get a small cut, you bleed a little, a band aid. A major cut or wound you bleed a LOT, the lifeblood flows and you die. "Lifeblood", it keeps the body going! SO THE LOVE that is the LIFEBLOOD of the Family Church.

True love is an elusive thing in this world...and the human heart yearns for it! To be loved is JOY! To be loved is LIFE! Without the search for love and disappointment in that search, we would not have many songs to sing! Think about the song collection of YOUR life:

Lookin' for love in all the wrong places, lookin' for love in too many faces, searchin' their eyes and lookin' for traces of what I'm dreamin' of...LOVE HURTS, LOVE SCARS...What's love got to do, got to do with it...what's love but a second hand emotion...MORE THAN A FEELING...more than a feeling...WHEN I HEAR THAT OL' SONG THEY USED TO PLAY...

Maybe the cult movie, *The Princess Bride*, is the closest that pop culture will ever get to enunciating "true love": **"Love, true love, will follow you, forever..."**

Lionel Ritchie tried...and whether he knew it or not *Endless Love* sounds a lot like the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament with no thought of Jesus and his bride the Church!

My love...There's only you in my life...The only thing that's right.
My first love...You're every breath that I take...every step I make.
And I, I want to share...All my love with you...No one else will do,
And your eyes...They tell me how much you care...
You will always be...My endless love.

Two hearts, two hearts that beat as one. Our lives have just begun. And forever I'll hold you close in my arms...
I'd play the fool for you...You mean the world to me.
I know I've found in you...My endless love.

Ed and Katherine Meyer walked this earth in Bay City, MI in 1993. They will always be for me a fine example of love as the lifeblood of the family church. Ed and Katherine showed up every Sunday 25 minutes before church. They'd pull into the same spot right in front of the glass doors. Ed would make his way around to Katherine's door. He would open it and help her out; he would take her by the hand and they would walk into church. Stopping and visiting they would smile and laugh and then holding hands walk up the center aisle, find their pew, and sit right next to each other to listen to their Jesus!

One summer day they came into the church office to give an offering to their Lord and purchase flowers for the altar in praise to God for 65 years of marriage! "Ed and Katherine," we asked, "if you could give advice to all of the young couples today entering marriage, what would be your advice for 65 years?!"

Ed tipped his head back and thought and smiled. "Well, pastor, I'd tell 'em that they have to learn how to live between the roses."

“What does THAT mean?” we asked.

“Well, marriage...and life...is like a bouquet of roses. There are beautiful blessings but as you live them you discover thorns among the blessings...and every once in a while you get poked! The secret is sticking with it, seeing it through--*living between the roses*. Stay committed and the roses return. The longer you are married, the more the roses, the fewer the thorns.”

If Ed were here today, he would tell us that they learned that love from their Jesus, the TRUE lifeblood of the Family Church!

1. LOVE That SEES It Through

a. Your Love Changes the World!

The Apostle Paul knew thorns in his love for God’s people! Blessings were popping up all over as the Church grew and people came to faith! But persecution and imprisonment was Paul’s lot as he told the world about its Savior! But Paul had learned how to live between the roses and to see love through!

“I ask you not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory (you are part of God’s family). For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

Why did Paul pray for Jesus to be *in the hearts* of the Ephesians? And why might YOU *pray that* for your family or your friend circle or your church? Well, Jesus and HIS love changed the world! In his letters to Rome and Corinth, Paul wrote that *“God demonstrates his love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...and Christ’s love compels our living because we are convinced that he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them.”*

The Apostle John puts it this way: *“We love because he first loved us!”* Jesus’ love changes the world as he lives in our hearts!

Is this a true statement? “There are Christians in every corner of the planet who are changing the world for Jesus.”

Remember how Jesus taught us to “turn the other cheek” in our struggles with each other and with the world? Imagine if NO ONE ever turned the other cheek when someone hit them first with fist or words! If you hit me, and I hit you, and you hit me and I hit you—what will you probably do? Hit me again...and the evil only escalates and gets uglier and hurts more!

Unless ONE of us stops...and says, “No more!”, and turns the other cheek. “Go ahead. Hit me again, because I am done hitting you.”

“What? Are you afraid? Are you weak?!”

“No, I choose a different code of life. A code of love...the code of Jesus. He could have crushed us for our sin but he chose instead to turn the other cheek and to die for sin...for me...for you. And he has changed me...commanded me...to love others like he does. To change our world with a view to eternity and to the treasures that truly matter. Go ahead and hit me, but I am done hitting you.”

APPLICATION Would there ever have been a series of Geneva conventions to lay down laws for the humanitarian treatment of prisoners of war and of battlefield wounded without the influence of Jesus Christ on Western culture?

Would the NATO alliance truly exist where WE care if Poland is invaded, if Jesus Christ wasn't an influence on Western culture?

Would the respect for women that has grown in Western culture—though still *woefully* inadequate—even be a reality if Jesus had not taught us how to love each other, to be different than the world and so to change the world? *Love that sees it through* to the blessing of every *ONE* among us?

b. Your Love Powers the Family Church

Is Jesus Christ present in our homes and in our circle of friends so that he informs and influences family culture? Is he present through his Word so that HIS love for us is the lifeblood that powers and enables the Family Church?

- Do you “turn the other cheek” when your spouse is irritable after a bad day at work?
- Was it a bad day at work because you DIDN'T turn the other cheek when a co-worker was unjustly critical of you?
- When your 16 year old acts like a 16 year and disrespects mom, do you join her in being 16 or do you turn the other cheek and discipline rather than retaliate?
- 16 year old, when dad acts like he's 12, what do YOU do?

What would the Family Church LOOK like if NO ONE was first to BE Jesus--to forgive and love as he loves while staring down and smiling down sin—dealing with it to HIS glory rather than venting my anger?

APPLICATION When the Jews disrespected Jesus saying with contempt, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”, Jesus bit his tongue and probably prayed, “Let them ask me and I will share. I come from Bethlehem!”

When the Jews disrespected Jesus as a worthless Messiah, “If you are the Christ, come down from the cross and we will worship you,” Jesus looked to the plan, swallowed righteous anger and willed his arms to stay nailed to that cross! Love seeing it through.

When Satan treated Jesus as a “daddy's boy”—“If you ARE the Son of God, bow down & worship me—show your independence and I will give you the world without the suffering,”-- Jesus simply quoted his Father and walked away. “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.” Love that ended up changing the world!

2. Love That Gets PERSONAL

a. Your Love Chose ME!

But wait, there's more! *“I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 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, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”*

DO we GRASP how great is the love the Father has for us that we should be called children of God? For that is what we are!

I have three siblings. Dad always said that he and mom stopped at four because “if we'd had a fifth, I think your mom would've had a nervous breakdown.” PRACTICALLY speaking, my parents' love had limits. It was big enough for six total and no more.

How big is God's love for US do you think? Himself + 5? But YOU are thinking, it's gotta be bigger because what about me? Is God's love big enough for himself +25? Or do YOU need it

to be bigger?! Is God's love big enough for all the people we can fit into a 32' in diameter circle? Or is it bigger still? Yes? Give me a proof passage? Yes! ***"God so loved the world that he gave his Son that whoever believes..."*** That pretty significant love!

Would my wife have married me if she had known that the list of my sins as of today could fit, 12-point font, into this little circle? Well, she did! Because she knew me. Would my wife have married me if she had known that the list of my sins, 12-point font, would fit into a circle 32' across? She might have blinked on our wedding day, but God didn't! You see, God's love is more than a feeling. It is a decision that gets personal. He chose to love ME with all of my sins...and it hurt...him!

For love to be real, God couldn't just pretend that my sins, our sins--our selfish lack of love—just "didn't happen", because sin hurts others and him! So what did he DO about the sin in order to love us justly? ***"I know! I'll send my Son! His love is big enough to turn the other cheek AND to 'take it' for the world—the punishment! To hell and back will be our love, and forgiveness will be our gift to the world! Through faith! Love without limits!"***

b. You Choose to Love THROUGH Me!

"Love without limits." "John 3:16." "September 30, 2018." That is what is written here. I will give this Stanley 16' Leverlock to the first person who will take it, and take it home, and display it and use it—maybe even take it to work--so that others will see it, and look at you, and wonder, and eventually ask—"What's up with you and that bible passage? Are you a Jesus lover or something?"

"Well, it just so happens that I am! Do you want to hear the story about how I came to possess this special tape measure? It reminds me that God's love knows no limits and that ALL who believe in Jesus as their Savior will be in heaven one day. Sin forgiven! Love without limits! I like that message and it is SO worth sharing!"

Any takers? Can you Love as Jesus loved? Subtly...AND obviously? LOVE THAT IS THE LIFEBLOOD? A tape measure isn't everyone's comfort zone, but is there ONE among us?

"I pray that you may know the love that surpasses knowledge...that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

"O God, you chose to love US; you choose to love THROUGH us! Make US your servants!"

CONCLUSION *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

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