

# God is Love

Acts 8: 25-40

1 John 4:7-21

John 15: 1-8

May 10, 2009 - UM

Will you join me in a moment of prayer?

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight O God, our strength and our redeemer, amen.

It is Mothers Day in the secular world, although in the United Church this day is Christian family Sunday.

A day when we celebrate not only mothers and fathers but take a look at what it means to be sisters and brothers in Christ.

In our baptism liturgy we tell the newly baptized parents or person that they have entered into a whole new relationship with the church family.

That they are brothers and sisters with everyone else in the faith community and in an ideal world, that is how we would treat each other.

Most of us learn about love from our home life.

It's important to say that not everyone has been blessed with a mother or a father who has the ability to love in that way.

It's also important to say that this day may be difficult for those who weren't able to have children, or for those whose parents' have recently died.

Which is part of the reason that we celebrate Christian Family Sunday... a time to honour those who have nurtured us and those we have nurtured, even if the title mother or father is not part of that nurturing role.

For some, the love of God in Christ is the first experience of unconditional love.

For some, the love of God is their only experience of love.

So on this Christian Family Sunday, let's think of all our readings in the light of God's love.

The first one seems fairly straight forward, until we delve into it a bit...An Ethiopian official is baptized...

The significance of the story is that he is a eunuch and since he is reading from Isaiah we have to assume that he was a convert to Judaism, but as a eunuch he would be barred from full participation in temple worship.

Somewhat like some denominations still exclude women and gaypeople from full participation in leadership and congregational life and ritual.

His baptism meant full inclusion into the Christian community, what better demonstration of the wideness of God's love?

Let's move on to the letter as an example of how to love: First we see that love comes from God, knowing love is an indication of relationship with God.

Next we see that God is love. Not "God is loving," or "God can love" but "God IS love"

Third, God's love is revealed to us in the incarnation, in Jesus Christ, who came to live among us, as one of us.

That love is not generated from US, but from God

Fourth, because of this love from God, we should love each other.

God's love is made visible in the way we love one another

Our love testifies to our belief in Jesus' words about loving neighbour as self. .

Finally, this kind of love is proof that we abide in God, and God abides in us.

This kind of love casts out fear, has no room for hate, tosses resentment aside.

Because fear, hate and resentment crowd out our ability to love each other.

And if we are not loving each other, we are not loving God.

If we love God, we will love one another.

Pretty strong stuff... Love... No blame... No fear... No resentment... No holding grudges...

No hanging on to any of that stuff... But letting God prune it away... as we heard in the gospel reading, so that we are strong branches of love.

How many of you are familiar with the book "Love You Forever" by Robert Munsch?

I read it to the children a few weeks ago and afterwards Allan McDermaid came up to me and said that it was a shame that nobody had music for refrain that runs through the book.

Well it turns out that Love You Forever started as a song and if you go to the Robert Munsch website you can hear him sing it.

But he also encourages others to make up their own tunes and to send them in.

*"I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always,  
as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."*

*Munsch says about this book: I made that up after my wife and I had two babies born dead. The song was my song to my dead babies.*

*For a long time I had it in my head and I couldn't even sing it because every time I tried to sing it I cried.*

*It was very strange having a song in my head that I couldn't sing.*

*For a long time it was just a song but one day, while telling stories at a big theatre at the University of Guelph, it occurred to me that I might be able to make a story around the song.*

*Out popped Love You Forever, pretty much the way it is in the book.*

*My regular publisher felt that it was not really a kid's book and I ended up doing it with another publisher.*

*One day the publisher called up and said "This is very strange. It is selling very well in retirement communities in Arizona.*

*It is selling in retirement communities where kids are illegal.*

*This is supposed to be a children's book. What is going on? Grownups are buying it for grownups!"*

*In fact, it turned out that parents buy it for grandparents and grandparents buy it for parents and kids buy it for everybody and everybody buys it for kids.*

*As a matter of fact, everybody buys it for everybody. That's why it sells a lot of copies.*

*I think it's my best book. So far it has sold about 15,000,000 copies."*

<http://www.robertmunsch.com>

I don't think it's strange at all that fifteen million people bought this book.

They are looking for the kind of love in their lives that they find in this book.

They are looking for love that forgives... that casts out fear...

That loves us even while saying "This kid is driving me crazy!"

A love that loves us when we are tiny and helpless... When we screw up.

It's a love that seeks us out, even when we are old and frail... A love that cradles us in its arms and holds us and sings to us.

This is the kind of love that God has for us....This is the kind of love Jesus has for us.

It's this kind of love... No matter who we are...No matter what we've done... This love opens its arms and says to each one of us...

I'll love you forever.

That is the kind of love that our faith communities can practice... love that goes beyond the surface of similar clothing and skin colour, to be brothers and sisters in Christ... because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Thanks be to God, amen.

© Catherine MacDonald