

A Mother's Love From Above, Within, Sent Out
Mother's Day 5 12 19
North East United Methodist Church
Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

The following notice was spotted in the lost and found section of the newspaper: LOST DOG—\$50 REWARD Black and tan dog of poodle and German shepherd descent. Flea-bitten, left hind leg missing, no hair on rump, blind, and recently neutered. Answers to the name of “Lucky.”

Some of us are a lot like Lucky. Of mixed ancestry, not much to look at, and in pretty bad shape...we still answer to the name of Lucky. We are indeed fortunate, for like the dog, we have someone who cares enough about us to look for us, to pursue us, to desire us, to pay to get us back. And God did pay to get us back—it cost him the life of his only Son. That dog is lucky, and so are we—lucky that our Master would love us so much.

Max Lucado, in his book, He Chose the Nails, writes,

“Have you ever wondered why God gives so much? We could exist on far less. He could have left the world flat and gray; we wouldn't have known the difference. But he didn't. He splashed orange in the sunrise and cast the sky in blue. And if you love to see geese as they gather, chances are you'll see that too. Did he have to make the squirrel's tail furry? Was he obliged to make the birds sing? And the funny way that chickens scurry or the majesty of thunder when it rings? Why give a flower fragrance? Why give food its taste? Could it be He loves to see that look upon your face?”

He goes on to writes,

“If we give gifts to show our love, how much more would he? If we – speckled with [selfishness] and greed – love to give gifts, how much more does God, pure and perfect God, enjoy giving gifts to us? Jesus asked, ‘If you hardhearted, sinful men know how to give good gifts to your children, won't your Father in heaven even more certainly give good gifts to those who ask him for them?’ (Matthew 7:11).

God's gifts shed light on God's heart, God's good and generous heart. Jesus' brother James tells us: ‘Every desirable and

beneficial gift comes out of heaven. The gifts are rivers of light cascading down from the Father of Light' (James 1:17). Every gift reveals God's love..."

God's Amazing Love... We so often forget don't we... in the midst of our daily lives, our troubles, the imperfect love we receive from people around us, frustration, anxiety, rudeness, financial burdens, depression, despair, work... We forget as our daily lives are filled with activity... recreation, television, news, and family. We forget as our "to do" list stretches itself out... a Monday drags it's self out... as we wipe ourselves out...

We forget what Jesus did for us... the love He showed us... we forget to pray and give thanks... we forget to let go of our guilt in the midst of such love... we forget as we work on our bills that we can walk around as one who has been forgiven a great debt... we forget as we feel enslaved to the computer and tasks at work that Christ has loosened our shackles and made us free... we forget to allow our hearts to skip and jump as we tingle thinking about Jesus thinking about us as He walked toward the cross. We forget God's amazing love for us. We forget.

A Mother's Love From Above...

The Bible tells us God's love is like a mother's love for her child...

Isaiah 66: 12-13 - *"For thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river. and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed. On her sides shall you be carried, and dandled on her knees, as one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you."*

Jesus describes His love as that of a mother for her children...

Luke 13:34b - *"...how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings..."*

God is described as a mother eagle...

Deuteronomy 32:11-12 - *"like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions."*

And “*carries them on its pinions*”...

J.R.R. Tolkien in The Return of the King, tells the story of two great friends...Sam and Frodo...hobbits...carrying the ring of power to its destruction in the fires of Mt. Doom in order to save Middle Earth...at one point, Tolkien writes,

“Now for it! Now for the last gasp!’ said Sam as he struggled to his feet. He bent over Frodo, rousing him gently. Frodo groaned; but with a great effort of will he staggered up; and then he fell upon his knees again. He raised his eyes with difficulty to the dark slopes of Mount Doom towering above him, and then pitifully he began to crawl forward on his hands. Sam looked at him and wept in his heart, but no tears came to his dry and stinging eyes. ‘I said I’d carry him, if it broke my back,’ he muttered, ‘and I will!’ ‘Come, Mr. Frodo!’ he cried. I can’t carry the ring for you, but I can carry you and it as well.”

I think about a mother’s love...carrying her child for nine months in her womb...carrying her child in her heart for a lifetime...feeling each hurt...each pain...hoping for the best...

Imagine Jesus on the cross...looking down at us...weeping in his heart...no tears...too dry...eyes stinging with blood...”*I said I’d carry him...I said I’d carry her...and I will...I will...it won’t break my back but it will cost my life...”*

Max Lucado, in Come Thirsty, writes,

“The big news of the Bible is not that you love God but that God loves you; not that you can know God but that God already knows you! He tattooed your name on the palm of His hand. His thoughts of you outnumber the sand on the shore. You never leave his mind, escape his sight, flee his thoughts. He sees the worst of you and loves you still. Your sins of tomorrow and failings of the future will not surprise him; he sees them now. Every day and deed of your life has passed before his eyes and been calculated in his decision. He knows you better than you know you and has reached his verdict; he loves you still. No discovery will disillusion him; no rebellion will dissuade him. He loves you with an everlasting love.”

Let us not forget...

Now some of you...are basking in the remembrance of what Christ did for you...your heart is opening...you are whispering “*thank you, Jesus,*” “*thank you, Lord*” under your breath this morning...praising Him...

But some of you...are sitting here saying, “*Well, that’s all good for you Pastor Drew...but you don’t know what I’ve done...God could never love me like that...I am so unworthy...*”

I John 4:16-17 - “*We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.*”

Lucado writes,

“One word into the passage reveals the supreme surprise of God’s love – it has nothing to do with you. Others love you because of you, because your dimples dip when you smile or your rhetoric charms when you flirt. Some people love you because of you. Not God. He loves you because he is he. He loves you because he decides to. Self-generated, uncaused, and spontaneous, his constant-level love depends on his choice to give it... You don’t influence God’s love. You can’t impact the treeness of a tree, the skyness of the sky, or the rockness of a rock. Nor can you affect the love of God.”

Romans 5:8 - “*But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*”

You are unworthy...as am I...that is what makes God’s love all the more amazing...receive it...accept it...stop fighting it...You are unworthy but God is able...God is love...and He loves You...

But some of you...are still sitting here saying, “*Well, that’s all good for you Pastor Drew...I mean I know God can still love me...but I know I have to make up for what I’ve done...I am here in church, serving on committees, getting involved in ministries...I am working hard to makeup for the life I’ve lived, the mistakes I’ve made...one day I will have earned God’s love fully...*”

Romans 4:5 - *“But people are declared righteous because of faith, not because of their work.”*

Romans 3:27 - *“Can we boast then that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on our good deeds. It is based on our faith.”*

This idea that we have to earn God’s love back fully through our good deeds is what my friend Richard Huston would call this “*stinkin thinking...*” put there by the enemy, the great deceiver...

Lucado addresses this in Come Thirsty...He talks about the disciples... Jesus told His disciples, *“Tonight all of you will desert me...”*...Never...They scooted...ran away...*“mighty men who are today stained-glassed in a thousand cathedrals spent the night crawling and hiding beneath haystacks.”*

He writes, *“They abandoned him and ran away. When the kitchen got hot, they got out. Amazing. But even more amazing is this. When Christ rose from the dead, he never brought it up. Never. Not even one, ‘I told you so.’ The disciples outran the guards but they couldn’t outrun the love of Christ.”*

Desert God – he’ll still love you.
Deny God...like Peter – he’ll still love you.
Doubt God...like Thomas – he’ll still love you.

Are you convinced that you have never lived a loveless day? Not one.
Never unloved.

We walk around and say...If I cuss less, pray more, drink less, study more, get more involved in church...if I try harder, God will love me more? Once again, Lucado writes, *“Sniff and smell Satan’s stench behind those words. We all need improvement, but we don’t need to woo God’s love. We change because we already have God’s love. God’s perfect love.”*

You can’t earn it...You can do nothing to make God love you any more and nothing to make God love you any less. Nothing can separate us from God’s love. God is love.

Romans 8:38 - *“And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels can’t, and the demons can’t. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can’t keep God’s love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

God has written you a love letter...beautiful words of love...etched on a Roman cross...blood red...they scream to be heard...they say, *“I love you...”*

Receive His love. Immerse yourselves in it. Allow it to drench you, pour over you, fill you. Know that you have been many things, but you have never...you have been many things but you have never been unloved.

And allow His love to change you...

God gives us His love and when we surrender to it...when we fill our lives with Him and His love instead of the things of the world...when we allow His Spirit to work throughout our lives, our actions...we cannot help but to love one another.

A Mother’s Love From Within...

There is a scene in the mini-series *Into The West* where a young Indian, “Voices That Carries,” has returned from an experimental school in Pennsylvania where they have tried to civilize the Indian. “Voices That Carries” returns to his people and is there the day Sitting Bull is killed by soldiers. During that moment, he kills a soldier in protecting his brother. Days later he is speaking to one of the chiefs and he breaks down, tears flowing, a young man caught between his world and the white man’s world. He cries out, *“I have lost my center.”* The chief replies to him, *“The world has lost its center.”*

The Bible tells us that we can tell when someone has *“lost their center,”* when they are falling away in their relationship with God...when they have forgotten the love God has shown them and are not allowing that knowledge to transform them and their actions...

The Bible tells us that if we draw close to Christ we will show the fruits of the Spirit...

- **Joy**
- **Peace**
- **Forbearance**
- **Kindness**
- **Goodness**
- **Faithfulness**
- **Gentleness**
- **Self-control**

and the most important...

- **Love**

I John 4: 7-12 – *“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God – for God is love. God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been brought to full expression through us.”*

Do you know people in the church and without that do not live lives of joy and peace, kindness and goodness, gentleness and self-control...lives of love...perhaps they have “*lost their center*” – for if we draw close to Christ...if we meet with Him each day – we will recognize His amazing love for us...and His love will change us...transform us...and in turn, reach others...

A Mother’s Love Sent Out...

This love of God, flowing through His people, was clearly seen in the early church.

Acts 2: 46-47 - *“They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity – all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the*

people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.”

Rick Warren talks about the early church. He writes,

*“The life of the early church was lived out on three fronts: in the temple courts, house-to-house (that’s their small groups), and then in the neighborhoods and community around them. The Bible says that as nonbelievers saw the early Christians loving each other and living a lifestyle of biblical fellowship, everybody around them was in awe, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved...Nonbelievers were so impressed by the fellowship of these believers and the love they had for one another that they wanted to be in on it...It’s all about love. **Because without love, nothing else matters; it’s just wasted effort. And without love, the church has nothing to offer a lost and dying world.** Now love must be the motivation behind all of our purposes. It is our love for God. It’s love for one another and love for the lost.”*

Just as a child watches his or her mother...just as our children watch how we behave and act...the world is watching us...

I John 3:18 - *“Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions.”*

Why are there so many people walking around in and outside the church, depressed, distressed, and lost? Why are there so many people walking around that do not know, that have no idea God loves them? Why are there so many people walking around that have not felt the love of a fellow human being, that are not part of a loving community? Why are we not overflowing with love for those around us, for the stranger, for the sinner, for the hurt?

Because we *“have lost our center.”*

Richard Rolle wrote, *“Let us make God the beginning and end of our love, for he is the fountain from which all good things flow and into him alone they flow back. Let him therefore be the beginning of our love.”*

Let us never forget...that we are loved with a mother’s love...unconditional and all-encompassing – let us never forget the God who gave us birth and

gave us His Son...let us make God the beginning and end of our love...our center...and may the knowledge of this love that God has bestowed upon us change us...and move us...to be filled with the fruits of the Spirit and to love one another...

A Mother's Love From Above, Within, Sent Out... Such love can change the world!

Video – Never Been Unloved