

## **LOVE THAT BINDS** *LOVERS AND NOT STRANGERS*

Texts: Deuteronomy 30:15-20  
1 Corinthians 3: 1-9 (Series A, 6th. Sunday in Epiphany) Ps. 119:1-8  
Gospel of Matthew 5:21-37

Free text: **Song of Solomon 4:1-15**

Prayer:

An American couple is driving through Canada and stops at a gas station to fuel up. As the man goes into the station to pay, his wife calls out to him, "ask them where we are!" So the husband walks in, pays, and asks, "by the way, where are we?" To which the attendant answers, "Saskatoon, Saskatchewan." The man goes back to his car and the wife asks, "where are we?" "He doesn't speak English" replies the husband.

On this Valentine's Day, people send more roses, buy more candy, and say "*I Love You*" more often than on any other day of the year. Whether it's directed toward spouse, parents, child, or classmate, it is likely that you too have said, "*Be my valentine*" to someone on Valentine's Day.

But love has many shades of meanings. The "*I love you*" expressed to one's spouse has a different meaning than the "*be my valentine*" on a card one first grader gives to another: *Real love is a very personal thing.*

These days, we hear so much about marriages and love relationships ending up in tragedy. Marriage break ups are on the rise, and divorce like death has touched every household including mine.

Sadly, to say this phenomenon is not only just confined to young couples, but also couples who have been married for 30, 40 years or more are getting divorced. What is causing *lovers to be strangers*. I am not either a marriage therapist, or Dr. Phil and I wouldn't attempt to answer the complexity of marriage what causes *lovers to become strangers*.

But I will attempt though this morning to share with you the *Spirit of Valentine* from a pastoral point of view..... the risk, the vulnerability in celebrating love relations, celebrating God's love, which makes us *Lovers and not Strangers*. The Scripture text: the *Song of Songs* depicts romantic drama between Solomon and the young woman.

This love between a man and a woman is a typology of God's love toward his creation. Love as noble as it may sound is full of risk and hurt. Because to love is to be vulnerable, there is risk involve loving, but not to love, is to deny the very part of us that is so beautiful, that makes us human.

To those who value God above all else *Love relationship* provides a testing ground of faith .... test site of the heart that has promise not only for this life but for the life to come.

People do change, situations differ, and dreams shattered. But the same God who made love relationships, made it to endure the disappointments, the ups and downs, and predictable seasons of life that marks all good relationships.

True relationships are built upon a promise, not a passion only. Should the passion die, relationships can continue because of the promise. In other words: it's not our love that sustains our commitment, it's our commitment that sustains our love. It is commitment that fuels Love to endure the ups and down in any human relationships.

Therefore, if the Song of Solomon opens our eyes to the glory of God in earth and the heavens, it has served a gracious purpose. It is love, and love alone, that gives us this new and glorious world. Love, that is simple, deep, and passionate, such as is displayed in the Song of Solomon. Divine love that makes us: *Lovers and not Strangers*.

Song of Solomon is not all *allegory* or *metaphoric*. They reach out into the Old and New Testament, and lay hold of the love of God in its length and breadth, its height and depth.

Love is the theme of the day, central message of the Song of Solomon, what strong, and true words are they! *“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can flood drown it.”*

Valentine, *Lovers and not Strangers*, and the Christian faith after all, is a matter of intimate, personal relationship with God. There is always the temptation to forget this and to think of Christianity in impersonal terms, as a system of doctrines or a code of ethics.

But the gospel, the good news, is that God has made himself known as redemptive love in Jesus Christ. And Christianity proclaims that faith is not simply a matter of proper beliefs or ethical standards, but a personal relationship of, *“God and I”* relationship.

*“Jesus, your boundless love to No thought can reach, no tongue declare; O knit my thankful heart to you And reign without a rival there, Thine wholly, thine alone, I’d live Myself to thee entirely give.”* **Lovers and not Strangers.**

I consider myself really blessed, blessed because of people I believe God brought into my life’s journey. One particular couple that comes to my mind is Paul and Maria Heuberger in Kitzingen, Germany.

Both Paul and Maria are well educated and are the most intelligent people you could ever meet. Yet they are most humblest, simplest, and down to earth couple I have ever met.

The respect and devotion they have for each other is undisputable in my opinion. They are so much in tune into each other, they seem to think alike and yet maintain their individuality. Their prayer life and commitment to God is incredible. These and other attributes stemmed from love they have for each other. *Making them Lovers and not strangers.*

An old pilgrim was making his way to the Himalayan Mountains in the bitter cold of winter when it began to rain. An Inn keeper said to him, "How will you ever get there in this kind of weather my good man? The old man answered cheerfully... My heart got there first, so it is easy for the rest of me to follow.

The Song of Solomon is not a treatise on love in general or an abstract discussion of the idealism of love; it is the love story of two individuals, this person and that person. It is an exclusive story, personal, intimate and private.

As the lovers speak of their love, they say, "*I am yours,*" "*You are mine.*" They know that they "*belong*" to each other, that they were "*made*" for each other. The thrill of possession and commitment runs like a refrain; "*My beloved is mine and I am his, and his banner over me is love*" (2:16).

As you wish your spouse, child, mother, father, partner, or classmate *Happy Valentine*. Remember that this is possible because of him who first loved us that while we were yet sinners and hostile(enemies) ... God made us *Lovers and not Strangers*. By the cross, God sealed his love for us.

It is said that in ancient times in Persia the *Festival of Love* was celebrated for six months. If that were so today, I can only assume that there will be less hate and wars and we would have more time to show love.

Valentine's Day is the day that speaks of love, not just human love but God's love. For Christians it is first and foremost a day to remember God's love for us, .. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" Praise God ... He has chosen us to be his "*Valentine*" through the Cross. Making us *Lovers and not Strangers*.

*The Way of Love:* "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now ***faith, hope, and love*** abide, these three; but the greatest of these is ***Love***. This Divine love that makes us: *Lovers and not Strangers*. **Happy Valentine to you All.**

**May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep  
our heart and mind through Jesus Christ our Lord  
which makes us Lovers and not Strangers. Amen.**

**February 12, 2023**