

February 12, 2017 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Love in All Its Aspects #1: *1 John 4: 7-9*

Becoming a parent is an amazing transforming experience. When I witnessed the birth to my first-born Zachary, it was a lot more than we expected. He was face presentation and would not come out. Ten minutes of transition turned into an hour of torture for his mother. The specialist had to be called to turn the baby. Eventually he succeeded and Zachary was born high forceps delivery sporting a black eye for his trouble. It sure made it easy to pick him out in the nursery.

But the delivery was horrible and wonderful all at the same time. Unfortunately we could never discuss his birth after that without me getting into trouble somehow. However being born really begins nine months before. I have different memories of that experience.

Being born begins in intimacy, with dampness, darkness and desire. It begins with hope and expectation. It contains commitment, longing and care.

It is a love that wants to multiply itself, where the two become one and are increased by one.

1st.John's great statement about Divine love, love in all its aspects, remind us of the love that brings to birth: The love that engenders new life, new beginnings and new possibilities.

**“Everyone who loves is born of God
and experiences a relationship with God.”**

So, to love fully is to be *conceived* in love, to be *born* in love, and to *grow* in love.

#2: 1 John 4: 17,18

“There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear.”

I remember when I first learned to live the central aspect of this teaching about love. It was Thirty nine years ago right about now.

Her name was Christina. I was in my final year of seminary. An appeal went out from the Toronto Children’s Aid Society for emergency infant receiving homes. We applied, were accepted and three days after Christmas a five day old six pound baby girl was placed in our inexperienced hands. The deal was we would care for her for a month until the court orders and paper work were processed and she would be gone to a new family forever.

Well to make a long and heart breaking story short, after a month, the paperwork was nowhere in sight and we were getting deeply attached. So we decided the wise thing to do was to draw back emotionally. So we did. I don’t know how exactly we did it, but tiny Christina knew immediately what was going on. Tiny Christina hollered bloody murder, hour after hour.

Eventually, well about twelve hours later, we finally came to our senses and realize we couldn’t protect ourselves from what was to come. Christina could feel what we were doing and demanded and deserved all the love we could give her! We had to love this baby with all our heart and suffer whatever, later. We decided to Love Recklessly.

Now you need to know that I was very often the primary care giver. My wife was the primary wage earner as a supply teacher in Toronto. When

the phone rang at 6:30 am she had to go and I had full responsibility. Dr. Spoch soon became another holy scripture for me.

The challenge to love doesn't always come at easy times or with easy requests. We each had to dig down into a well-formed love that banished our fears. We had to love recklessly. We did for five more months.

Then on hot and humid Friday morning in early June we had our hearts broken wide open. It was one of the most painful experiences of my life and, yet I would suffer it all over again in a minute.

“There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear.”

Well, we lived to love another day.

#3: 1 John 4: 20,21

I remember from way back a two frame cartoon where a person is down on their knees, hands clasped together, praying to **Jesus**. The caption in the first picture reads,

***“Why is it Jesus,
that every time I pray for you to come into my heart,
you bring all your friends with you?”***

The next frame shows **Jesus** with a large group of people gathered behind him; prostitutes, lepers, destitute folk, you get the picture. The people we don't expect to see in church, let alone invite home for a meal.

It is funny that we want or expect a private, personal, relationship with **Jesus** unencumbered by the world **God** so loves: Unaffected by **Jesus'** loving acts of healing, caring, teaching and restoring. **Jesus'** love for God was expressed in his love for neighbour. The simple fact is we can't love one without loving the other.

1st.John's great statement about Love instructs us about this very situation.

“If we won't love the person we can see,

how can we love the God we can't see?

The command we have from Christ is blunt:

Loving God includes loving people.

We've got to love both.”