

May 3, 2015 Easter 5

Love 1

Remember when you first fell in love?

Remember that thrill of falling head-over-heels for someone?

Can you also remember the agony as well as the ecstasy of it all? I was 18!

It was my final year of high school in Ontario. It would have been my final year of Cegep here in Quebec.

I had had girlfriends before but then it happened. I fell in love.

Remember when you first fell in love?

Now the girl who captured my heart was a Sunshine Christian. She was radiant, with a sunshiny personality. I on the other hand was a loud, attention seeking, somewhat wild and a bit of a bad boy. But there was something about her. She possessed something in herself that I knew was missing in me. I guess it was the faze of ‘opposites attract’. At least that’s what everyone thought: Little goody, goody two shoes going out with big bad John. Anyway, I felt an irresistible attraction to her, and was compelled to find out what her secret was.

I started going back to church with her even though she was Presbyterian.

We went to her church youth group together. One day after a Sunday lunch at her parent’s house where we reviewed and discussed the merits of the minister’s sermon, the discussion rolled around to love. That is when I learned her secret and so much more. She took me into the living room, got our her bible and found the passage we are reading today.

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not loves does not know God, for God is love.”

What! **God** is love! Is it that simple?

Why hadn’t I heard this before?

Now to be fair, I was raised a good, affluent United Church cultural Christian back then. That’s code for we went to Chruch between the cottage season and the ski season. We were spring and all specials so to speak. So, maybe that kind of spotty attendance explained my ignorance.

Well anyway, there it was ‘**God is love**’, and I was in love and wow I totally got it. But you know, over the years I learned that it wasn’t that simple. My 18 year old hormone heavy, yet spiritually searching love wasn’t exactly what the scripture meant. In fact I have learned that most of what we call love now-a-days isn’t even close to the mark.

Falling in love with **God** is the same but different, as my kids would say. The different is the absence of the hormone heavy part. To fall in love with **God** is to fall in love with all whom **God** loves. Soon we discover that means everyone.

That was my first love's secret. She was radiant, a sunshine Christian because she loved everyone even a wild one like me.

Love 2

Two love songs have been playing through my mind this week.

Tina Turner's What's Love Got to Do with it. Sing it with me.

What's love got to do, got to do with it.

What's love but a second hand emotion.

What's love got to do, got to do with it.

Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken.

And Bette Midler's The Rose. Again, sing it with me.

Some say love it is a river.

That drowns the tender reed.

Some say love it is a razor.

That leaves your soul to bleed.

Some say love it is a hunger

An endless aching need.

I say Love it is a flower,

And you it's only seed.

Both songs reflect the ambiguity surrounding love. Especially the fear of having one's heart broken.

Do you remember your heart being broken?

Do you remember the pain, the anguish, the lostness.

Well so do I, but enough already about me.

So much of what we call love is fraught with fear. Fear of one sort or another. Fear of rejection, fear of embarrassment, fear of infidelity, fear of betrayal, fear of abandonment. The list goes on and on.

However our scripture tells us that ***“well-formed love banishes all fear. Perfect in the moment love knows no fear.”*** But make no mistake, a love that casts out all fear doesn't mean happily ever after. Let me tell you my story of when I first discovered the kind of love which casts out all fear and what this casting out all fear means.

When I was in my final year of Seminary, a call came from the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, for emergency infant receiving homes. My wife felt strongly that we should apply. I wasn't so sure but we applied and were accepted. We were just in our early twenties!

Two days after Christmas, little Christina arrived. We were to care for her for about a month until she could be adopted. Well, a month came and went, and we were getting really attached to this precious little bundle of colic! So we decided to pull back! We thought we should hold back on our emotional investment. Well, Christina screamed blue murder all day. That night we realized that it wasn't about us, it was about what little Christina needed. She needed our love right now. She needed parental commitment right now. So we reconnected. We experienced love that cast out all fear. We loved recklessly. We had no idea what the future would hold. We just loved her with all we had.

Well, one month became two, two months became three. After four months we applied to adopt her. Four months became five and five months turned to six.

At six months the bureaucracy finally acted. Christina was awarded to another family and our fearless loving hearts were broken. It took me years to recover. But we learned how to love as God would have us love.

Well-formed love, perfect in the moment love is not about you or me. It is about others. That is the secret of love which can cast out all fear. Amen.