



Marks of the True Christian

Romans 12:9-18: Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

What is genuine love? All of us might be asking that question right now. As we watch this world react in anger, it is hard to see the meaning of love. What does it look like? To fully understand the kind of love which Paul has in mind as he calls the Romans to “let [their] love be genuine,” we need to highlight two different Greek words which describe “love.” The first of these Greek words is “philadelphia.” As you may know from the motto of the city of Philadelphia, this word refers to brotherly love--the love that blood relatives have toward one another, at least ideally. We as the church are to love one another with brotherly and sisterly love that reflects the love we have with God, the Father. If we have this kind of love for one another, this “philadelphia,” it will be apparent through our actions, which is what the Greek word “agape” means. “Agape” is much more than any feelings of love; it is the love that we show by our actions, even if we do not feel it! Quite simply, love is more about what people do, not how they feel. When we love one another in such a way that it is reflected through our actions, then we are loving genuinely. We begin to share our lives together, and we are drawn together as an authentic Christian community. That is the amazing thing about the Christian life; repeatedly we discover that when we behave toward someone as though we really do love them, then, to our surprise, love, care, and concern for the person’s welfare quickly springs up!

Are you personally willing to help someone in need? Because that is what it means to love genuinely and to be the church. We go out of our way to act in love to meet the needs of another person. The day will come when we need that from someone else. Being the church is not a guarantee that we will be delivered from any misfortune; rather, it is the promise that amid misfortune we will be sustained and perhaps even strengthened.

Did you ever pause to think about what it is that leads people to proclaim that Jesus really is the Son of God, and to follow him as the Lord of their lives? For some, it might have to do with great sermons or uplifting worship music, but for many it is something quite different that makes Jesus “real” in their lives. And that is when the church shows “agape” and “philadelphia.” Most people come to faith because they see a case for Christ being in their lives--lived out through humility, patience, compassion, hope, passion, peace, and above all, love. Are we living our lives in such a way that it will lead others to faith in Christ? If we are not or if we are struggling with how exactly to live in such a way, Paul has

outlined it for us today. Paul's words to the Romans are the building blocks by which we might join as an authentic Christian community shining the light of Christ into the world and leading others to proclaim Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Imagine what an impact the very act of genuine love might have in the lives of people. We could change this broken and angry world through love. Let us be that kind of person and church that wants to change the world. Let us love as Christ has first loved us!

Scripture for February

02-07-2021	Our Daily Bread	Matthew 6: 7-13, Matthew 6: 25-34
02-14-2021	Forgive Us Our Trespasses	Matthew 6: 7-13, Matthew 18: 21-35
02-21-2021	Come Follow Me: A Disciple's Journey through Lent: The Baptism of Jesus	Matthew 3: 13-17
02-28-2021	Come Follow Me: A Disciple's Journey through Lent: Wilderness Temptations	Matthew 4: 1-11

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Debbie