

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

One Sunday the pastor was finishing up a series on marriage. At the end of the service, he was giving out small wooden crosses to each married couple. He said, "Place this cross in the room in which you fight the most and you will be reminded of God's commandment of love and you won't argue as much." One woman came up after the service and said, "You'd better give me five crosses."

Dear Friends,

Love itself is defined well in so many ways, but it has to be expressed in certain directions. That's why we have so many forms of love. Though there are seven forms in love. In the New Testament times four words are used prominently 1) Philia, 2) Eros, 3) Storge, and 4) Agape.

In today's readings we talk about love of God and love of neighbor. The first reading from the book of Exodus talks about the love of resident alien. Exodus 20: 22- 23:33 is called by biblical scholars a "covenant code" and today's passage explains the rules of protection and money lending. That was a social justice thing in the Old Testament time. Because God did the same thing to the people of Israel.

The Gospel speaks of the covenant code of the New Testament. Before we dive into love, I would like you to learn why they all questioned Jesus? Who are they? We have heard in the Gospels, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes of the law and so on. They were six known groups of people in Jesus' time.

Pharisees: a group of influential lay men who collaborated with the rulers and strict observers of mosaic laws and traditions. **Sadducees:** a separated group of people (most of them were priests) who got their name from Zaddock, closely associated with Jerusalem temple as well as with Romans. Theologically conservative and didn't believe in the possibility of resurrection. Rivalry to pharisees. **Essenes:** a group of people (teachers of righteousness) who live outside the city and of monastic life near the dead sea, not interested in festivals and worship in Jerusalem City. Scholars think John the Baptist might have belonged to this group. **Herodians:** a group of people who completely supported the policies of Herod. **Zealots:** is a revolutionary group who opposed Roman occupation in Israel. **High Priest, Chief Priests, Priests, and Levites:** members of the tribe of Levi who were responsible for the temple and its sacrifices and thus they were the religious and social leaders of the Jewish people. Scribes and Elders are from both the groups.

These groups act against Jesus in so many places in the scripture, because he questioned their power and belief system. Both religious and political systems were against the

ordinary people. As a group, each one is trying to bring Jesus down with complicated things all the time and were afraid of power conflict. Jesus gives them answers to them from their own beliefs.

We read in the book of Genesis 3:8 God asked Adam " Where are You?

We all love God and try to love our neighbor. Where are we? How do we do that?

In love, we want to fix people or replace or ignore people. That's why we have problems in any of our relationships whether it is marriage or any other relationship. When you have problems with a car, you either fix it or feel you can't fix it, you replace it with another car. If you don't have enough money to get a new one, you ignore the issue and run the car as long as it runs. You can't do that in relationships.

In any relationship, if you really love someone, you will have to accept the person, then delight in them whether sometimes you like it or not and then you love them. I used to say, three A's for healthy life. 1) Acceptance 2) Adaptability 3)Appreciation and affection.

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God does not fail at love. God waits. God says, "How wonderful that you are learning!" God says, "I love every person on earth. And you: you are my beloved. I am at your side as you learn to open to me and to others."

There is a breaking point in all our lives. God's breaking point is to love us. Where are we now ?