

WEEK – February 13 – 19

GOD’S POWER REVEALED IN LOVE AND SERVICE

With grateful acknowledgement to the Church of the Resurrection,
Kansas City.

MONDAY – God’s power revealed in love



1 John 4:7-12let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.

This definitive passage said that loving one another grows out of our identification with the heart of the God of the universe. It isn't just that God loves us – God IS love. If the creator's love is the ultimate source of our life, then, there's power in love. "There's power in love to help and heal when nothing else can. There's power in love to lift up and liberate when nothing else will. There's power in love to show us the way to live." *

Reflection:

Verse 11 called all of God's children to grow toward loving as God does. What helps you to grow toward having all you do be an expression of love?

The Greek word *agape* is a chosen attitude. Brotherly love must be worked and supported by exercise of the will. Love makes allowances. Love tries to help. Love looks at the good people do in preference to dwelling on their defects." **



Prayer: Dear God, You ARE love—what a mind-stretching truth. You know it's not quite as natural for me to love. Please keep loving me as You stretch my ability to reflect your love to others. AMEN

* Curry, Bishop Michael. *The Power of Love* (p. 8). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

** L. L. Morris, article "Love" in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997, pp. 697-698.

TUESDAY – Jesus’ message: turning our world right-side up



Acts 17:2-8

Acts 17:3; 6-8 ... “This Jesus [who] I am proclaiming to you *is the Messiah,*” he said.

But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.

Love isn’t just “spiritual”—it changes the world right now. Bishop Curry (presiding bishop in The Episcopal Church, USA) noted, “This movement was perceived as somehow reordering the way things were, ‘turning the world upside down’....the reason the movement was turning the world upside down was because members of the movement gave their loyalty to someone named Jesus and committed themselves to living and witnessing to His way above all else....The way of Jesus will always turn our worlds and the world upside down, which is really turning it right-side up.” *

Opposing people in power will often feel like turning the world upside down. Whether in your home, your work, your friendships or your community. Power that doesn’t fit with God’s principles.

Jesus was counter-cultural and regularly upset the *status quo* with His teachings and actions. The people who were in charge rather quickly perceived Him as a threat, despite His apparently lower status and power than theirs. Jesus tends to upset the *status quo* of our lives when we become disciples, too.

Reflection:

In what ways has Jesus turned your world upside down...or right-side-up?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, I don’t want to maintain the *status quo*. I’m ready for You to be in charge, to upset my life in the best way possible. Help me be a part of creating a world that is right-side-up.

AMEN

* Curry, Bishop Michael. *The Power of Love* (p. 75). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition

WEDNESDAY – Jesus revealed the key to true life



John 3 3-8

John 3:7&8 *You should not be surprised at My saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.*

Life is a major theme from the very start of the gospel of John (John 1: 3-5). So it made sense that, when Jesus met the cautious Pharisee Nicodemus (he sought Jesus in the dark of night), Jesus used the image of birth to point to the new quality of life he offered. "He said to Nicodemus, 'You must be born again.' In the Greek it can be translated born again, born anew, or born from above. And the point, I think, the only reason to be born is so that you can live. God wants you to live." (Bishop Curry) *

- How did Jesus connect the ideas of "birth" and "new life" as He spoke with Nicodemus?
- Trace the role that God's Spirit, and your openness to the Spirit's work, play in creating that new spiritual life.

- In what ways can Jesus' image of wind working invisibly, yet powerfully illustrate the Spirit's work in your life?
- How, if at all, are you living in a new way due to God's presence in your life?

Most Pharisees opposed Jesus' ministry. There were times that Jesus felt anger at their hard-hearted righteousness (Mark 3: 5). Yet He never wrote them off as "enemies" or "hopeless." When a Pharisee like Nicodemus showed any willingness, however tentative, to listen, Jesus responded in love.

Reflection:

What does His conversation in today's reading teach you about one aspect of loving your neighbour?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, you've never written me off; You never will. I open my heart to Your Spirit's work in giving me the refreshing, renewing gift of new life. AMEN

* Curry, Bishop Michael. *The Power of Love* (p. 46). Penguin Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

THURSDAY – Jesus’ love the source of our love



John 15:9-10

John 13:34-35, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

Bishop Curry in *The Power of Love*, highlighted how the setting of Jesus’ “new commandment” showed that loving is much more than a fuzzy, fluffy sentiment: Jesus’ teaching here was not long before His death, when He would show what love looked like. Sacrificing Himself for the well-being of others. The command to love one another was not new, but “as I have loved you” took “love” to a whole new level.

Jesus began John 15: 9 with ten key words: “As the Father loved me, I too have loved you.”

- In what practical ways do you live out your commitment to love God and others?
- To what extent are you able to view self-giving, and not self-

gratification, as key to the kind of love that makes life genuinely worth living?

Jesus showed the disciples what one writer called “a triad of love.” The Father loves me, Jesus said. In the same way, I have loved you. Now, as I have loved you, love one another. We often fall short, but this kind of love is willing to do the hard work of binding wounds and working to reconcile.

Reflection:

How does it bring you strength to know Jesus’ love for you is rooted in God’s eternal love? How can we live out Jesus’ committed, steady love toward one another and our neighbours?



Prayer: O Lord, help me increasingly to love, not as an outward disguise to hide my anger or pain, but from my heart as Your love overflows and bubbles out of me to bless others. AMEN

FRIDAY – “Real power. Power to change the world”



Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Colossians 3:14 *And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

If “Love your neighbour” sounds “soft” to you, Bishop Curry suggest a different perspective. “Someone once said that Jesus began the most revolutionary movement in all of human history; a movement grounded in the unconditional love of God for the world; a movement mandating people to live that love, and in so doing to change not only their lives but the very life of the world itself. I’m talking about power. Real power. Power to change the world.” Want to change the world? Come join in loving your neighbour!

“As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other.” Sound simple? Consider C. S. Lewis’ perceptive: “I find that when I think I am asking God to forgive me....I am asking

Him not to forgive me but to **excuse** me. Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin that is left over without any excuse, after all allowances....that [real forgiveness] we can always have from God if we ask for it.” *

Reflection:

How have you learned that you can’t genuinely forgive without loving, and can’t genuinely love without a willingness to forgive?

As you compare Jesus’ positive impact on our world over the last 2,000 years with the sad legacy of all the violent, revenge-driven tyrants who’ve tried to build empires, can you understand Bishop Curry’s words about “power to change the world” more clearly?



Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me clarity about my daily need for Your forgiving, empowering grace to nurture and grow me. And grow me into a person who makes forgiving and loving a rhythm of my life.

AMEN

* C. S. Lewis, “On Forgiveness” in *The Weight of Glory and other addresses*. Harper San Francisco, 1976, pp. 178, 181. (Lewis’s entire essay on forgiveness is well worth reading.)