

4.26.2026 Easter 3 (1 Peter 2:17)

There was a group of women gathered at a seminar titled: *How to Live in a Loving Relationship with Your Husband*. The women were asked, "How many of you love your husbands?" All the women raised their hands. Then they were asked, "When was the last time you told your husband you loved him?" Some women said today, some yesterday, and some didn't remember. The women were then told to take out their phones and send the following text message to their husband: "I love you, sweetheart." Then they were asked to exchange phones and read the husband's response.

Here are some of the replies:

1. What now? Did you crash the car again?
2. You may dispense with the pleasantries. Just tell me how much it's going to cost!
3. Whatever it is... I won't forgive you this time!
4. Am I dreaming?
5. I don't understand what you mean!?!

In our Epistle this morning, St. Peter exhorts Christians to honor all people, and to *love* our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Peter 2:17). His command to love is direct, but do we really understand what he means, do we comprehend the height of this call to love? We live in a culture that doesn't treat the word love with the respect it deserves, and we speak a language where its meaning isn't entirely clear. As we drive around town we see signs that say, "love is love," and bumper stickers that profess a driver's love for just about anything from "I love giraffes," to "I love bacon."

We speak of love often, and normally it's easy for us to discern the difference in meaning when we talk about the different types and ways we love, but if we had to describe the Christian love for one another that St. Peter commands in our Epistle, to a person with no knowledge of the Christian faith or the English language, how would we do it? If love is love, then how would I explain the fact that there really is a difference between my love for Taco Bell and my love for Ted? It sounds like a silly question, but perhaps taking a minute to reflect on what makes Christian love for one another so distinct and so different will help us fulfill this command - to love.

In a book titled, *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis set out to describe four types of love that are found in the Bible. He wrote about the love of affection, describing it as a humble love that lives in private things like "soft slippers, old clothes, old jokes, (or) the thump of a sleepy dog's tail on the kitchen floor..." Affectionate love is tied to the expected and the familiar, and Lewis believes it to be the primary type of love we experience in our day-to-day lives.

Lewis wrote about the love of friendship. He described friendship as a love that closely resembles heaven, because heaven is a place where we'll be intertwined in our relationships. Friendship is a love of the things we have in common, a love of camaraderie, a love shared by fellow-travelers as they walk the same path.

Lewis wrote about romantic love, describing it as different than friendship because lovers are "always talking to one another about their love" and are normally "face to face, absorbed in each other." Romantic love, according to Lewis, tosses "personal happiness aside as a triviality," and plants "the interests of another at the centre of our being," and in this way Lewis believes romantic love is "an image, a foretaste of what we must become to all if Love Himself rules in us

without a rival.”

Lewis wrote about the love of affection, friendship, romance, and above all a love called charity, or in the Greek, agape. Agape is love in its highest form. It’s what Lewis might describe as “Love Himself,” the love that must rule in us without a rival, and this love that must have no rival is described biblically as the unconditional love of the Father given to us through His Son. Agape must be given to us because it doesn’t come naturally. We are by nature fallen, and unable to produce such love. Therefore, as Christians we find great comfort in the way Scripture describes God’s love being “*poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit...*” (Romans 5:5). You see, God knows that we can’t give what we don’t have, and so He pours His love into the Christian heart to the end that we may love one another as He loves us.

We rely entirely on God as the source of love, and as our example of how to love. The love of God that has poured into our hearts isn’t known primarily by feelings of affection, friendship, or romance. Rather, agape is known by what it wills and what it does. The love of God wills the good of another, and actively and personally works toward that good, and the Cross of Christ is certainly the greatest example of such love working to will the good of another, and it is in this example, set for us, in which we see that contrary to popular belief, love is not a two way street. Love is not 50/50. You don’t get what you give. The Son of God didn’t lay down His Cross and ask us to meet Him at the half-way point. Instead, for our good, He took up His Cross, laid down His life, and the sacrificial, unconditional way He loves us is the same way He calls us and empowers us to love one another. Now, as children of God, we can either humble ourselves and follow our Lord’s perfect example, or like many children do, we can use the freedom He gives us to go our own way - to define love in our own way.

Our culture would have us believe “love is love,” but on the Cross, God declared, “This is love” (1 John 3:16). Perhaps it’s time for us all to start treating the word love with the respect it deserves, to say I love you, remembering that love is a sacrificial act of the will for the good of another. Love is our Lord’s Body broken, His Blood shed. May His love rule in us without a rival, to the end that we may fulfill our Lord’s commandment: *“Love one another; as I have loved you”* (John 13:34).