

112th Annual Reunion Service, Central Mine Methodist Church – July 29, 2018

Minister: Rev. Dr. Daniel Rosemergy

Organ Prelude Father Corbin Eddy

Greetings & Announcements: Jim and Jeff Curto

****Introit** Come, Let Us Tune Our Loftiest Song (West & Hatton)

Call to Worship

Hymn: All Creatures of Our God and King

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

A Time with Children/Youth [Parable of the Good Samaritan, Currant Cookies, Copper]

***Children/Youth Anthem** Let the Sun Shine Down (Peter Johns)

****Anthem:** With a Voice of Singing (Martin Shaw)

Responsive Reading: 19th Sunday First Reading – Love Never Faileth

Hymn: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name (Diadem)

Scripture Readings: Verses on the theme of Love, including:
Micah 6:6-8 Do Justice, Have Kindness, Walk Humbly with Your God
I John 4:7-12 The Mystery and Power of God's Love
Luke 10:25-28 The Great Commandment: To Love God and Neighbor

Call to Prayer O, Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go (Matheson/Peace)

Pastoral Prayer and Moment of Remembrance Clayton "Keith" Mugford, 1940-2018

Offering and **Offertory Anthem: Walk Humbly with Your God (Joel Raney)

Doxology

Sermon: **Love Wins in the End** (Abridged)

Contemporary Reading: Poem "Messenger" by Mary Oliver [*Thirst*, p. 1]

My work is loving the world.
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird—
equal seekers of sweetness.
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect? Let me
keep my mind on what matters,
which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning to be
astonished.

The phoebe, the delphinium.

The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.

Which is mostly rejoicing, since all the ingredients are here,

which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart
and these body-clothes,

a mouth with which to give shouts of joy

to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam,

telling them all, over and over, how it is

that we live forever.

I love this poem: “My work is loving the world”—being open to the beauty of creation, to be grateful for our lives—minds and hearts—and the many ways we can change and bring kindness and love to the world through what we *do*, acts of caring, the way we relate with others and share in creating a better world. *It’s all about the way we show love!*

I have a lake stone on my desk, a paper weight, with the words, LIVE, LOVE, LAUGH engraved on the surface. I reflect on those words each morning, praying that I strive to live them fully that day. It is important to decide what we believe and then to continue to find ways each day to live those beliefs.

Our local YMCA has a fresh fruit smoothie bar called “9 Fruits.” Each smoothie comes with a cardboard holder with the “9 fruits of the Spirit” from Galatians 5:22-23: LOVE / JOY PEACE / PATIENCE / KINDNESS GOODNESS / FAITHFULNESS / GENTLENESS SELF-CONTROL. It is this kind of “living out” of our faith with the fruits of the Spirit that is so important in our world today. We live at a time when conflict, division, hostility, and polarization are rampant. It casts a pall over our individual and collective lives.

A few months ago, our church choir sang Burt Bacharach’s song, you know it--“What the world needs now is love, sweet love. It’s the only thing that there’s just too little of, not just for some but for everyone.” Ok, all together now-- [congregation sang].

We do need love in our relationships, in our societal and political discourse, in our personal lives. I have been paying particular attention to acts of love, examples to hold onto, some light, some serious. In an October 5, 2017, article, “A Massachusetts bakery [was] dinged by the FDA for a litany of infractions,” which included reprimanding them for “citing ‘love’ as an ingredient in their rolled oats.” The bakery CEO responded, “I really like that we list ‘love’ in the granola. People ask us what makes it so good. It’s kind of nice that this artisan bakery can say there’s love in it and it puts a smile on people’s faces.”

Then there’s Super Hero Austin, a 4-year-old in Birmingham, AL, who once a week turns into his alter ego, a Super Hero set on feeding as many homeless people as possible. It began with watching a nature film on abandoned, homeless panda cubs. When he learned that humans, too, become homeless, he said he wanted to use his allowance to buy food persons who are homeless. “It’s the right thing to do,” Austin said. He wears his Super Hero cape, and when he gives out a sandwich, he says, “Don’t forget to show love.”

Another of our heroes is Fred Rogers, whose TV theme song was “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” Some quotes from Fred Rogers: ♦ “Love is at the root of everything---all learning, all parenting, all relationships. Love or the lack of it. And what we see and hear on the screen is part of who we become.”

“◇ The greatest thing we can do is to help somebody know that they’re loved and capable of loving.” ◇
“From the time you were very little, you’ve had people who have smiled you into smiling, people who have talked you into talking, sung you into singing, loved you into loving.”

In 2001, I spoke about “Living God’s Love” and focused on family, community, and church. Today, I want to reflect on the power of living God’s love and the difference it can make through simple acts of kindness, doing loving things that can make you feel good, doing loving things that can bring us together, and loving acts that can change lives and society.

Love in Sacred Writings (Scripture). Thomas Merton wrote, “Because we love, God is present.” That is the story. Reflecting on that simple statement, one realizes that if we are not living love in the world, God’s love is not as full as it could be. It requires each of us bringing love to those around us and to the society in which we live. We’ve probably heard many times the scriptures we heard this morning. Love does not just happen but *requires* each of us to bring love to others.

Micah 6:6-8. The question is asked: With what do I come before God? The question concerns sacrifices and offerings. The answer is, “God has showed you, O people, what is good . . . to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.” This is what God *requires* of us. These requirements summarize the responsibilities of the nation and of individuals in the covenant relationship; they all have to do with human activity in society and under God. To do justice concerns the establishment of law in the courts, the care for equity in human relationships. To love kindness (or mercy, steadfast love) is to be faithful in covenantal relationships, to maintain solidarity with others, including those in need or trouble. To walk humbly with your God is a summary of the others, to follow the will of God.

Luke 10:25-28 The Great Commandment to Love God and Neighbor. We all have heard this commandment many times. We have spoken it often. But to stop there is to miss an important part of the commandment—*action*—“to go and to do.” There is a version in Mark and Matthew, as well. In Mark, the questioner is a scribe, in Matthew a lawyer. In both, Jesus supplies the answer: complete love of God and neighbor. In Mark, the emphasis is on love being more important than burnt offerings (as in Micah). In Matthew, the lesson is that on these two commandments hang all the law and prophets. Luke’s lawyer asks, what shall I do to merit eternal life? Jesus has him supply the answer to his own question: What is written in the law? You shall love your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Jesus tells the lawyer he has answered right. *Do this, and you will live.* The lawyer asks, who is my neighbor? Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan and asks the lawyer, which of the three (Priest, Levite, Samaritan) do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robber? The lawyer answered, the one who had mercy. Jesus responds, go and *do* likewise.

Acts of Love and Kindness—Stories of Central. The “go and do” commandment seems to have come naturally to the miners and settlers. It was the mining captains who offered jobs whenever they could. It was the boarding house women who took miners in, provided care, meals, places to sleep. It was the mining partners who looked after new miners and cared for them. It was ministers and lay preachers who tended to worship and spiritual needs. It was the miners who looked after one another. All acts of kindness—folks who just naturally followed the “go and do” commandments.

Alfred Nichols came to Central Mine in May 1880 as a miner, joined the church choir, met his wife Eliza Carter Chinn, was injured in the mine and lost use of his left arm, pursued an education, and began a career in education. In his relationship with students, he concluded that “the rod” would be a last resort:

“I believed there was a more prudent course. I believed kindness and companionship invoke blessings upon both the giver and the receiver.”

These are lessons for us, the examples of love and caring we should emulate.

Love Wins in the End—Our Contemporary Lives. I am not suggesting that there aren't wonderful acts of love around us if we are open to them and lift them up. They need more attention and coverage to overshadow all the divisive and hateful acts we hear about. “To go and to do.” Let's start with an update on the examples I gave earlier.

A writer responded to the FDA criticizing love as a granola ingredient: “the overwhelming majority of consumers can discern the difference between a human emotion and rolled oats, even without the vigilant assistance of a government agency . . . it's a sad day when a small company, proud of the tasty whole-grain yoghurt-topper they produce, cannot wittily claim love as a part of the cooking process. Before you know it, Campbell's will be getting slammed for listing 'Smiles' as the first ingredient of Goldfish crackers.”

Super Hero Austin has continued his feeding the homeless campaign and expanded it. Burger King has now offered him all the chicken sandwiches he needs for free. Austin has started a Go Fund Me page, which has raised \$56,000 toward an initial goal of \$65,000 for a homeless shelter.

The documentary *Won't You Be My Neighbor* has continued to draw large crowds and rave reviews. A reviewer wrote that it was “Technically good, but also capital-G Good: the sort of humanity-affirming quality that one identifies with saints and saviors . . . Ultimately, the most singular feature of [the film] is that it takes for granted the assumption that being good—humane, compassionate and kind—is the goal. Sarcasm and shock aren't valued; love is.”

There are so many other examples all around us. ♦ The 51 fanciful lighthouses on display in Chicago placed by the Chicago Lighthouse, which assists persons with visual and other disabilities. ♦ The Santa Fe community that gathered to attend the funeral of a Pakistani exchange student gunned down at a Texas high school. “We love her and she loved us.” The host of the event said, “The root of our issues is love. Because when people love each other, these things don't happen.” ♦ Joanne Ball, a friend of ours, carried a large sign during the recent Washington DC march; it read, “LOVE—Feel It, Live It, Defend It.” ♦ Scott Wendt, in a recent Facebook photo post reflected on love with the analogy of a waterfall: “It starts with a trickle. . . one kind word . . a heart-felt gesture . . . cascading downhill . . . person to person . . . gaining speed . . . picking up volume . . . breaking the silence of indifference . . . roaring with the power of love . . . and the inescapable audacity of hope . . . that what we all know to be right . . . prevails.”

Go and Do. Bishop Michael Curry's Royal Wedding sermon “The Power of Love” captures it: “There's a 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. . . . When love is the way, we know that God is the source of us all, and we are brothers and sisters, children of God. My brothers and sisters, that's a new heaven, a new earth, a new world, a new human family.”

A long-time friend and colleague, the Rev. Bill Barnes [Nashville United Methodist minister], died recently. He was loved and respected because he lived a life of love and justice for all. He referred to all people as COGs—Children of God. His daily prayer and confidence was: “Love wins in the end.” May it be so.

Hymn: In Christ There Is No East nor West

Benediction

Response: God Be With You Til We Meet Again

Organist: Father Corbin Eddy

Choir Director: Carolyn Martin Meyer

***Children/Youth Choir (& ages):** Aurora Bryant (7), Kaidyn Bryant (6), Payton Bryant (9), Gibson Duwe (7), Grace Ford (10), Peyton Ford (8), Zinnia Meyer (7), Cierralyn Okoro (12), Kate Probst (9), Meg Wiesner (4), Samantha Wiesner (11)

****Choir Members:** *Sopranos:* Carole Bard, Tacy Flint, Connie Martin, Nancy Molloy, Elaine Schultz

Altos: Phyllis Bergh, Joanne Bollinger, Marcia Goodrich, Deanna Martin

Tenors: Ramsey Meyer, Larry Molloy, Gerald Rowe, Jim Schultz

Basses: Chuck Meyer, Graham Meyer, Jack Porritt, Rodney Westlake

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