

Love is Eternal
Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins
February 14, 2016

Today is Valentine's Day! I am glad that people celebrate love and show that they care for loved ones on this special occasion. I hope that everyone here will let someone in their life know that they are loved and appreciated today. Love makes life bearable and gives strength for the tough journey that is all part of living.

Today I want to take you through some Scriptures of Bible characters who showed acts of love. One of my favorite story of love in action centers around an unnamed child who had been uprooted from her family in Israel , taken as a slave to Syria and given to a captain of the guard to be a servant to his wife.

The age of the child is not revealed but we know that God had his hand on her life. Naaman was an honorable captain of the guard, an honest soldier, loyal to his master and because of him, God had allowed him to win battles over Israel.

He had a good reputation and a promising future but for the fact he was a leper.

This child, who had been snatched from all that was familiar to her and taken into a home where she didn't know the people and everything was foreign to her, kept a right spirit within her heart. She reached out to her mistress with love and compassion. She said, "I wish my lord was with the prophet in Samaria for he would cure him of his leprosy." I find it amazing that this child didn't gloat over the fact that the man responsible for her hardship was sick. She ministered to this family concerning the power of God to heal through his prophet. Word reached the king that there was someone in Samaria who could heal the soldier and the king of Syria contacted the king of Israel by letter asking for his help in curing his soldier of leprosy. The king of Israel was distraught for he knew he was helpless in healing the dreaded disease, but Elisha got word of the request and asked that Naaman be sent to him. Elisha sent Naaman to the Jordon River to dip seven times and he was healed of the dreaded leprosy that would have taken his life. How many people who have suffered hardships through no fault of their own, suffer from bitterness and anger because of the circumstances that have deprived them of what they feel they deserve. Yet the Lord honored that child's faith and ministered to a pagan family who later came to worship the God of Israel. Love is a powerful tool in winning the lost to Christ. When people see the love of God shining through a life that has had the storms war against it and still they stand firm, the glory and honor goes to Jesus Christ. Our lives are a testimony for the power of God to sustain us when life is hard and we are treated unfairly.

In Acts 9:36, there is a wonderful story of love in action. In Joppa there lived a woman, a disciple of the Lord, named Tabitha who was called Dorcas. This wonderful lady did what she could for those who lived around her. She was full of

good works and was charitable to many widows and others who came in contact with her. One day she became sick and died. Her friends washed her body and laid her on the bed in an upper chamber.

Peter, the apostle, was ministering in a nearby town and her friends sent for him to come to help them immediately. Peter went with them and when he entered the upper chamber, he was greeted by weeping widows who showed him coats and garments that Dorcas had made for them while she was alive. Peter asked everyone to leave and then he knelt down beside the body and said, "Tabitha, arise". When he spoke those words, she opened her eyes, saw Peter and sat up. Peter offered her his hand, lifted her up and presented her alive to the saints and friends who were there for her. Many people believed on the Lord because of this miracle. The love that Tabitha had extended to others returned to her in her time of need. Deeds done in the spirit of love are never wasted or lost. The Bible says to "Cast your bread upon the water and it will return to you after many days." Ecclesiastes 11:1. Proverbs 19:17; Proverbs 28:27.

In Matthew 15:21, there is a beautiful story of God's love and compassion. A woman of Canaan who came from the borders of Tyre and Sidon cried after Jesus. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon."

But Jesus didn't answer her and the disciples tried to convince him to send her away because her crying was irritating them.

Jesus simply said, "I am not sent to anyone except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That didn't dissuade her for she came and worshipped him and said, "Lord, help me." Jesus said to her, "It isn't right to take the bread of the children and cast it to dogs."

(Jews referred to heathen as dogs because they worshipped idols.)

The woman said, "Truth Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from the master's table." Jesus answered her with these words, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you desire." And her daughter was made well even from that hour.

This heathen woman had no right to ask Jesus for he was a Jew, yet love for her daughter compelled her to face rejection, rebuttal and even refusal, yet she pressed forward until the Lord Jesus gave her the desires of her heart.

Do we love others to the degree that we will not give up on them even when it seems hopeless and a waste of time to plead for their cause? Love pleads; love bleeds; love hurts but love finds a way to ease the pain and suffering of others even when it costs a great deal. Love sent Jesus Christ to this earth to suffer rejection, humiliation,

mocking and scorning and a shameful death. Yet he worked tirelessly to feed the hungry, heal the sick, raise the dead and minister to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Even after they scourged him, crucified him and mocked his holy name, He cried "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." He loved the world even as he was giving his life for it. To the sinner, crucified next to him, Jesus consoled him by saying, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." To the soldier who had participated in the crucifixion, He opened his eyes so he would declare "Surely this is the Son of God." To his beloved John, He gave his mother to him so both would be comforted in their time of loss. He appeared and revealed himself to Mary Magdalene as she wept in the garden so her sorrow was turned to joy. God is LOVE!

If we are to be followers of Christ, we must love one another in word and in deed. In 1 John 3:7-13 reads like this: "Beloved, let us love one another for love is of God, and everyone that loves is born of God and knows God. Those who do not love don't know God for God is love." Verse 9 and 10 speaks about Jesus coming to this earth, sent from the Heavenly Father, because of love and giving his life's blood that we might have eternal life. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. If God loved us, then we must love one another. No one has ever seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwells in us and his love is perfected in us. We know that we dwell in him and him in us because he has given us of his Spirit. We have seen and testify to the fact that God sent his only Son to be the Savior of the world.

Be imitators of Christ and love those around us. We cannot love God and hate our brother. He commands us to love God, our brothers, our enemies and pray for those who despitefully use us. Let us pray one for another and lift up one another to the Lord in love.

HAPPY VALENTINE!

For God so loVed the world,
That He gAve
His onLy
BegottEn
SoN
That whosoever
Believeth In Him
Should Not perish
But have Everlasting life."

John 3:16