



Calvary Presbyterian Church
Sunday, SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

LOVE: FOR REALS
Rev. Eyde Mabanglo

NEW TESTAMENT READING - Romans 12: 9-21

⁹Love others *well*, and don't hide behind a mask; love authentically. Despise evil; pursue what is good *as if your life depends on it*. ¹⁰Live in true devotion to one another, loving each other as sisters and brothers. Be first to honor others *by putting them first*. ¹¹Do not slack in your faithfulness and hard work. Let your spirit be on fire, bubbling up and boiling over, as you serve the Lord. ¹²*Do not forget to rejoice*, for hope is always just around the corner. Hold up through the hard times that are coming, and devote yourselves to prayer. ¹³Share what you have with the saints, so they lack nothing; take every opportunity to open your *life and home* to others.

¹⁴If people mistreat or malign you, bless them. Always speak blessings, not curses. ¹⁵If some have cause to celebrate, join in the celebration. And if others are weeping, join in that as well. ¹⁶Work toward unity, and live in harmony with one another. Avoid thinking you are better than others or wiser than the rest; instead, embrace common people *and ordinary tasks*.

¹⁷Do not retaliate with evil, regardless of the evil brought against you. Try to do what is good *and right and honorable* as agreed upon by all people.

¹⁸If it is within your power, make peace with all people. ¹⁹*Again*, my loved ones, do not seek revenge; instead, allow God's wrath *to make sure justice is served. Turn it over to Him*. For the Scriptures say, "Revenge is Mine. I will settle all scores." ²⁰*But consider this bit of wisdom*: "If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink; because if you treat him kindly, it will be like heaping hot coals on

top of his head.” ²¹Never let evil get the best of you; instead, overpower evil with the good.

SERMON

My children have compulsory tendencies - one likes to push shampoo bottles out of order on the shelves at Fred Meyer; the other follows him and insists on resetting them all.

Just Right/Symmetry Syndrome - whether OCD or ADHD, some of us just want things to be “just right” and that can include our surroundings, our relationships, and our souls. Maybe there’s an area of your own life that you struggle with trying to make JUST RIGHT.

My family enjoyed the show MONK - comedy, crime, drama...not real life, but depicts that often real life includes all three - comedy, crime, and drama. Monk is a former detective that suffered the tragedy of losing his wife and now consults with local law enforcement as he also copes with a form of OCD that comes from his own trauma.

When a man responsible for his wife’s death asks for forgiveness from a hospital bed, Monk responds with his own interpretation of making things “just right”...

SCENE from “Mr. Monk Takes Manhattan”

[Warrick Tennyson](#): [Monk is in the hospital room of one of the men involved in his wife's murder] You were the husband?

[Adrian Monk](#): I *am* the husband.

[Warrick Tennyson](#): Forgive me.

[Adrian Monk](#): Forgive you?

[Adrian Monk](#): [pause] This is me... turning off your morphine.

In today’s passage, the author cautions us to love...FOR REALS. The scripture means that Love is not to be pretentious. It means, “Let love be without hypocrisy.” Hypocrite means to literally play act, or to carry out a charade. Forgiveness, charity, and love are not to be an act. Love is not to be showy.

Christ's love for us is not an act; it is NOT phony or showy...and we are to "put on" Christ by being agents of this kind of love in the world that God so loves.

IRL means In Real Life...today's passage simply says: REAL LOVE in REAL LIFE in the REAL WORLD. We read about agape love and it moves into a phileo (or brotherly) love...literally to love the stranger (philoxenia) not fear your neighbor (xenophobia). This means a practice of "unjudging others"...we do this by listening and learning and loving...FOR REALS.

The passage says, LOVE "like your life depends on it"! What an interesting phrase to include? But according to a recent article published by Johns Hopkins, our health/our life may very well depend on how well we can find forgiveness in our hearts.

Whether it's a simple spat with your spouse or long-held resentment toward a family member or friend, unresolved conflict can go deeper than you may realize—it may be affecting your physical health. The good news: Studies have found that the act of forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health, lowering the risk of heart attack; improving cholesterol levels and sleep; and reducing pain, blood pressure, and levels of anxiety, depression and stress. And research points to an increase in the forgiveness-health connection as you age.

Forgiveness is not just about saying the words. "It is an active process in which you make a conscious decision to let go of negative feelings whether the person deserves it or not... As you release the anger, resentment, and hostility, you begin to feel empathy, compassion and sometimes even affection for the person who wronged you.

...one study found that people whose forgiveness came in part from understanding that no one is perfect were able to resume a normal relationship with the other person, even if that person never apologized.

SOURCE: Johns Hopkins, [Forgiveness: Your Health Depends on It](#)

Maybe we can believe this because the internet said it, if it isn't enough the scripture says it... The passage is an encouragement to find healing in

forgiveness within our families, our church families, as well as beyond our homes and church homes to the communities in which we live and the world we are called to serve. The healing, the making right, or making just...and right comes from understanding that we all get it wrong from time to time. As we read Romans 5:8, we must each wrestle with any self-righteousness that has plagued religious rulers and afflicted many of us Christians throughout history.

Romans 5:8... *But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.* (NRSV)

"Vengeance is Mine" is a phrase that might come to our minds easily, but it isn't easily understood. Some take it to mean that we can hope in God settling the score for us. But friends, it is - ultimately - God's score to settle. It is his justice that needs to be set right. The scriptures are a gift to us to encourage us to instead focus on the steadfast love, mercy, and faithfulness of God - and it is God's performance of mercy time and again that we must focus on....mercy for us. Mercy for others. When we harbor resentment, hurt, and a vast record of wrongs, we are lying to ourselves and to the world about the true heart of God. When we know God's peace and live a life of grace and mercy, even after suffering profound hurt and pain, then we are indeed sharing the peace of Christ with one another.

As we think about the ways that maybe we suffer from a JUST RIGHT syndrome of our own, and have been distracted by an insatiable desire to hold those who hurt us in an unkind grasp of angst and hatred, maybe we can ask Christ to make our hearts more just...and more right...by sharing REAL LOVE in REAL LIFE in this REAL WORLD that God so loves.

A JUST and RIGHT outlook would bring about reconciliation, peace, healing, and wholeness into our hearts and into our communities...we don't have to perform...or just act like we love....when our own love is rooted in God's own performance of love through Christ.

THE REST OF THE SCENE from "Mr. Monk Takes Manhattan"

[Warrick Tennyson](#): Forgive me.

[Adrian Monk](#): Forgive you?

[Adrian Monk](#): [pause] This is me... turning off your morphine.

[long pause while intense pain hits Tennyson]

[Adrian Monk](#): And this... is Trudy, the woman you killed, turning it back on.

We can relate so much to Mr. Monk seeking to make things just right by turning off the patient's pain medicine...to have this man who took his wife's life and make him feel pain too. But just as Mr. Monk acknowledged that his wife's kind heart would not allow any more pain to hurt her husband or her assailant, he chose to be kind as she was also kind.

We may want to harbor hurt and pain and a false sense of just right syndrome in our own hearts, but scripture reminds us, time and again, that this is not the heart of God. We can learn to forgive, to set free, to heal, and to reconcile because Christ has shown us the way. We study the scriptures, like the passage today, to help us to find forgiveness of others—not judgement and ire.

It is God's love that we offer...it is God's forgiveness that we extend...it is God's love that is FOR REALS. So LET US GO and be those who will make things just and make things right...to extend grace, to forgive, to share REAL LOVE in REAL LIFE in the REAL WORLD.

May it be so. May it be so.

