



Sunday Morning Grow Groups

Week of December 9th, 2019

Magnify Love

Announcements (1-2 min)

- Carols, Ales, and Connect at Nine Band Brewery on Dec. 16th from 4-7pm. All ages and people are welcome!
- Angel Tree tags are now available. Help a friend at Mosaic or family with Emanuel Lutheran Community Center enjoy the joy of Christmas.
- Parents Day Out- December 15th, 11:30-3:30. GET YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DONE KID FREE! We are offering 4 hours of babysitting by our youth and their parents at the church. We will accept children ages 3-12 and this event will be run by volunteers. All funds raised will be designated for our Youth Mission Trips this Summer.

Connecting with Each Other (15 minutes)

- Welcome any new arrivals to the group by introducing yourselves.
- Catch up on your week by sharing a high/low.
- Spend a few moments on these questions:
 - What is your favorite christmas tradition as a family?
 - Did you participate in a Christmas program at church growing up? What was it like? What role did you play?
 - What is one easy way to show love this holiday season?

Digging Deeper and Turning to the Texts (30 minutes)

This morning is the second Sunday of Advent. This means we light our next advent candle on the wreath which represents love. Last week we talked about hope and it impacts on our lives. This week we look at what it means to magnify love in our lives as we continue our advent journey. Mary said that her soul magnifies the Lord, which can help us to turn our attention to Jesus and all the things that we should, and need to magnify in our lives. Jesus magnified love, and he has a lot to teach us about what it means to magnify love and live out our call to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Our gospel text today isn't the text that reminds us to love our neighbors. Rather, it tells us how to love those that are the hardest to love. Oftentimes, I forgot that this passage exists in scripture because I like being told to love, instead of being told how to love those that I struggle to love. Practicing hospitality? I can totally do that. Doing something good

for someone who I love and cherish? Yep, I can do that too. Showing love when it's easy to show love? I like to think I'm good at that as well.

On the flipside, loving those who I disagree with or someone who has disappointed me, giving without expecting anything in return, giving to everyone who asks me for something? I need to work on. As humans, we like to feel good about the things that we do for those around us, we like our ability to say no, and we oftentimes struggle with loving those who have betrayed us or are hard to love. This gospel reading forces us to look at our flaws, and realize that we are good at magnifying love when it's easy. This week's text reminds me that magnifying love looks like loving those who I struggled to love and those who are easy to love.

When we mess up, there is grace. I thank God for this. I am also thankful for our reading in 1 Corinthians that is another example of how we can love. Each scripture passage in worship this morning teaches us how to love, but they all say something different. This leads me to think that God knows that sometimes we need it laid out for us, sometimes we need to be reminded of it, and sometimes- we just need to know that the way that each of us love is unique to who we are created to be.

During this holiday season, I hope that you remember there is grace even when we forget how to magnify love. But more importantly, I hope that you make an extra effort to show God's love to those around you who you may disagree with, who you may view as an outside, and who you may not know needs more of God's love. Christmas is about love, and I encourage you to lead your lives with love- we all need more of it.

Luke 6:27-36

²⁷ "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you. ³² "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

- What sticks out to you in this passage from Luke?
- Do you struggle with any of this? Name those struggles.

- Has there been a time when you gave something to someone, and received little or nothing in return? How did that experience make you feel?
- What do you think Jesus means when Jesus says, “Do Good?” It’s a very broad command, and it could mean many different things.
- Is there someone that you can show more love to this season? How can you do that?

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

- Where have you heard this scripture reading before?
- What sticks out to you in this passage?
- Love never ends. How does this one sentence make you feel?
- I think this passage not only describes how we should love each other, but it also is a description that reminds us how God loves us- and that’s a pretty incredible thing. How have you seen God love you in the way that 1 Corinthians describes?
- How have you seen hope and love magnified in your life?

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, ² so that you and your children and your children’s children may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. ³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. ⁴ Hear, O Israel:

The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶ Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷ Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸ Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹ and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- Who taught you about loving God when you were a child?
- All three of these scripture passages tell us how to love. Which one do you identify or like the most? Why?
- What challenges you in the above passages?
- How can you get better at loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind?
- How can you teach others how to magnify love?
- How do we magnify God's love in a world that magnifies darkness?

Taking It Home (3 Minutes)

- This week at the dinner table or while in the car, go around and share three things that you appreciate about each person. It's a simple way to magnify love and affirm those who surround us every day.

Prayer (5 minutes)

Share any prayer concerns you may have with the group and then pray this prayer together:

Loving God, we await your coming,
We wait filled with hope,
Knowing your light will shine in the darkness.
We wait anticipating your peace,
Believing that one day it will fill our world.
We wait embracing your love,
May we reach out to share it with our neighbors.
Amen.