

Love One Another



Most of you know that our son Greg moved to California and got married. In just a few weeks we are going to visit him and his new family. While we have talked by phone and via the computer, this will be the first time we will be able to spend some time with Greg's wife, Becky, and the very first time we will get to hug our granddaughters, Natallie and Juliet.

I've been thinking about how we already have a deep sense of love for one another. Of course, this certainly wouldn't seem strange to anyone. In fact it would most likely be questioned if it were not so.

If I were to say, I'm going to wait until I get to know them better; learn about their past; see if they live like we do and have the same values, if they believe and act like we do then I will love them, folks would wonder what was the matter with me. Has he lost his mind? Has he no heart?

Of course we love them. They are family. We have chosen to love and accept one another.

Jesus said the greatest command is to ***“love the Lord your God with all our heart, soul mind and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves.”***(Mark 12:30)

The apostle John writes, ***“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God.”*** (1John 4:7)

Love is our choice. We are commanded to love, and we choose who we will love. For the most part we, the church, know and believe that we are to love one another. The larger question is who comprises one another?

Is family one another? What about those in our families who have lied to us, cheated us--the alcoholic, the abuser, the atheist, the in-laws, the loud and abrasive, the seemingly self righteous?

Is our church one another? Even those who sing off key, who dress differently, whose children act out; the one who seems to disagree with everything you say; the one who always demands his or her own way.

Is the community one another? The grumpy old man next door; the teen dressed in black with tattoos piercings and chains; the woman with five kids with different fathers; the man with no job and no desire to have one.

Who are these one anothers? Can we love them? The woman whose bad decision landed her in a halfway house; the man whose addiction shuffles him between jail and rehab.

Love is risky business, and we tend to choose to wait to see if someone is worthy of our love before we give it. Will they love me back or will I be hurt? Sometimes we choose not getting involved in their

messy lives. Often we choose not to love, help or care for someone thinking the risk to high, after all what concern are they to me.

However, if we look closely at Jesus' teaching He defines one another very broadly. In fact he says love our enemies, pray for those who persecute you. Why? Because we are all God's children and we all live together here on the third rock from the sun. And when we choose not to love, help or care for one another all of us are affected.

Rev. Grace Imathiu, the speaker at the Bishop's retreat, shared a story "Rat Trap in the House" illustrating our relatedness.

A rat looked through a crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package. What food might it contain? He was aghast to discover that it was a rat trap. Retreating to the farmyard the rat proclaimed the warning, "There is a rat trap in the house, a rat trap in the house!" The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Rat, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."

The rat turned to the pig and told him, "There is a rat trap in the house, a rat trap in the house!" "I am so very sorry Mr. Rat," sympathized the pig, "but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured that you are in my prayers."

The rat turned to the cow. She said, "Like wow, Mr. Rat! A rat trap. I am in grave danger. Duh?"

So the rat returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's rat trap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house, like the sound of a rat trap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see that it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife.

The farmer rushed her to the hospital. She returned home with a fever. Now everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. His wife's sickness continued so that friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well. She died, and so many people came for her funeral that the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide meat for all of them to eat.

So the next time you hear that someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you or it's too risky to love or care for them, remember that when there is a rat trap in the house, the whole farmyard is at risk. (Author unknown)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

Blessings, one another.

Pastor Duane