

Looking for Love  
(in all the wrong places)  
4 Lent B

**God's love is extravagant, superabundant and the nature of that love, can not be communicated completely.**

**From all of our lessons today we read of God's love: his compassion on his people and on his dwelling place, that God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ and how Jesus fed the five thousand through the gift of a child.**

**Love can be found in the right places. There are too many places where people will seek Love and not find it.**

Benjamin Franklin, when sixteen (1722), published in the New England Courant a series of essays now known famously as The Dogood Papers. In these letters the widow Silence Dogood announces her availability for marriage and sums up her characteristics: "To be brief: I am courteous and affable, good humored (unless I am first provoked,) and handsome, and sometimes witty."

People look for love in the back pages of the classifieds:

"HERE I AM unusual and good looking 37-year-old woman, sitting alone in my Manhattan apt. wondering where all the aware, caring, generous, stable and adventurous gentlemen are. NYR, Box 7258."

"HANDSOME NYC WRITER, 54, seeks very attractive, bright, nonsmoking woman. Dutch treat, naturally. Telephone 212-929-6257."

"EASTERN UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR - sympathetic temperament, modest income, seeks WEALTHY WIDOW for satisfying life. P.O. Box 3344, Pittsburgh 15230."

A Russian matchmaking enterprise read:

"I WOULD LIKE TO MEET A KIND, CHEERFUL, RESPONSIVE GIRL OF NO MORE THAN 25 YEARS OLD. I HAVE GRADUATED FROM A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL, WAS MARRIED BEFORE, NO CHILDREN. HOBBY: MUSIC, LITERATURE. ONE OF THE CONDITIONS OF A FUTURE MATE: A MOVE TO THE POLAR NORTH REGION."

It is not just people looking for mates who advertise in the classified pages. An advertisement for a "loving pastor" that appeared in the 1903 Methodist Reporter reveals the kind of love it was looking for in their pastor: "MUST HAVE SMALL FAMILY, IF ANY, AND BE ABLE TO FURNISH A HORSE AND COME TO

CHURCH UNASSISTED. MUST NOT BE AFRAID TO WORK, HAVE NO HOBBIES, HAVE A GOOD CLEAR HEAD, A WARM LOVING HEART AND BIG FEET. "

People are looking for love in all the wrong places: the internet, the classifieds, the small ads, the back pages of life. Little wonder that Henry David Thoreau observed that "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Part of our desperation is a lost biblical perspective of what kind of love we are made for, and hence meant to look for. Heavy hearts are lonely hearts, and our hearts are heavy because we have been looking for love in all the wrong places; WE HAVE ALLOWED THE THINGS THAT MATTER MOST TO BE AT THE MERCY OF THE THINGS THAT MATTER LEAST.

It's difficult to put love to a definition. Some high school sophomores were given an assignment to write an essay outlining their definition of love. One student wrote "Love is the feeling in your stomach of butterflies wearing roller skates." The one that took the prize, however, was this one: "Love is that feeling you feel when you feel you are going to have a feeling you have never felt before."

The inability for many to find love let alone define it prompted Paul Tillich, theologian and author, to describe love as cosmic power, the power of being itself, rather than an emotion.

Tillich writes:

'I have given no definition of love. This is impossible because there is no higher principle by which it could be defined. It is life itself in its actual unity. The forms and structures in which love embodies itself are the forms and structures in which life is possible, in which life overcomes its self-destructive forces.' "

Another simply concludes, "Love is the power, within us and without, that tears down the walls, removes borders, rebuilds the bridges, abolishes all barriers and brings God's people home."

In today's story of feeding the 5,000, we read of the compassion and love of God for his people. The story is Eucharistic for it points to the thanks we give for Jesus sacrifice on the cross. We also see this miracle as one of childlike faith, where adults are blind to what only a child can see.

A child sees the power of that love and compassion for his people. A child had the faith to see God's love in Jesus Christ. As the disciples are worrying about Jesus' inquiry -- "Where are we to buy bread for these people?" -- one small solution steps forward. A little child offers as an answer to the food question a new possibility -- five barley loaves and two fish.

Jesus likes the child's solution. He uses the little boy's gift to feed the people. While the text does not say that the child had faith in Jesus' ability to create a

miracle, this child recognized the power of Jesus love to meet the needs of so many people. He saw possibility, not puniness, in those five loaves and two fish. The child taught the disciples a lesson: They should have been looking for the largeness and superabundance of God's power to love his people. Jesus showed that a simple faith and the generosity of a child's lunch can demonstrate the power of God's love to meet any human need even that of hunger.

In a child's capacity to see Jesus' love we find God in all his compassion, mercy and power to make us alive in Jesus Christ.

EHarmony.com, Soulmatch.com and others advertise that people looking for love can with their help find the love of their life. In a childlike relationship with Jesus Christ, we can find love today, as we break bread together in the name of Jesus, who makes us alive through the power of God's love. While Jesus denied the people a king who would tell them what to do, he tells us to come as a child looking for love. The Lord of love is here and he wants to reign supreme in your heart. Amen.