



Our Easter program this year is called, "Love Lives."

*Jesus was love in action. Whenever you see Jesus, you saw what love looked like. He went about doing good and healing people, but the world could not handle 100 percent pure love, and killed him. However, the grave could not keep him and love conquered death. In this message we will look at **how the resurrection of Jesus shows that love lives on and that it cannot be destroyed.** Jesus lives in us and because he lives in us we can love as he did.*

Week 2 April 18 - April 24

SUNDAY

Today we celebrate Easter Sunday and begin a brand new message series Love Lives. In our world it often looks like darkness and anger and hatred are winning. Easter tells us a different story. Jesus who was perfect love in action could not be defeated even by death. Instead he emerged from the tomb to show that love lives and is greater than evil.

Love lives in the person of Jesus Christ. And love lives in us when we live connected to Jesus. The power to love God and love others comes not from us but from living in relationship with Jesus.

Throughout this series we will look at Jesus as both the model of how to love and the person who helps us love others. Today, thank Jesus that his resurrection is a reminder that love is stronger than death.

MONDAY

*Peter said, "You know what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power." **Acts 10:37-38a***

Acts of the Apostles tells us that Peter is led by the Holy Spirit to go to the house of a Roman soldier named Cornelius. He talks to him about Jesus. Everyone in that area of the world knew about Jesus. Crowds of people would come out to hear Jesus preach and teach. Wherever he went Jesus drew people towards him with rock star status.

The people who knew Jesus knew that he was powerful. However, his power and strength that were evident to everyone who met him did not come simply from his position. He had no position of authority – he did not run a company or rule as king or even hold a religious title. His power went beyond physical power, there was a spiritual power. It was a power that came from deep within him. It was a power that enabled him to love others all the time.

Pray today for the same Spirit and the same power that gave Jesus the ability to love others.

TUESDAY

Peter said, "Jesus went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem." Acts 10:38-39a

Jesus was and is love in action. Peter describes Jesus as someone who went about doing good. To his audience, the phrase that Peter used for "doing good" would have sounded similar to a "benefactor" which was commonly applied to ancient rulers when they provided for others. It reinforces the idea that Jesus brought great power.

He brought power to stand up for the lowly and defended them. He had a power and ability to develop relationships with people unconnected with God. He had a power that enabled him to feed thousands of people with simply five loaves and two fish.

Through his power, Jesus challenged the corrupt religious systems that were oppressing people. He taught and encouraged people to give to the poor. He lovingly challenged people to get rid of self-defeating behaviors.

Whenever you see Jesus in the Gospels, you see love in action. Sometimes his love was kind, sometimes his love was gentle and sometimes it was fierce and challenging. But every time you see Jesus, you see love in action.

Pray today to know Jesus' love for you personally.

WEDNESDAY

Peter said, "Jesus went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. This man God raised on the third day." Acts 10:38-40 a

Jesus was love action, but then on Good Friday it looked like love had lost and darkness had won. But then Jesus didn't stay dead. Jesus conquered death. On Easter Sunday, Jesus emerged from the grave victorious over sin and death and darkness and hatred and jealousy and violence.

Easter Sunday is the celebration that love lives. It is the celebration that love and light are greater than death and darkness. Furthermore, it is a celebration that the same power that gave Jesus the ability to love others is available to us. Through a relationship with Jesus Christ we can access the power to love the people around us the way we really want to love them.

Pray today for an understanding that love is greater than evil and darkness. Ask God to help you remember that in Christ you can rise from any injury done to you.

THURSDAY

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in this world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and pride of life is not of the Father but of this world. 1 John 2:15-16

The First Letter of John teaches us a great deal about loving God and loving others. The first lesson we learn comes in the words above. John teaches us that to love God and others we must not love the world. By the world, he does not mean creation or people, but the values of this world. Lust of the flesh means love of pleasure. Lust of the eyes means love for possessions. The pride of life means love of power.

Each of us will be tempted to love pleasure, power or possessions most of all. If we love the things of this

world, we crowd out our ability to love God, who give us the power to love others.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you are tempted to love pleasure, possessions and power. Pray for the grace to love God most of all.

FRIDAY

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in this world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and pride of life is not of the Father but of this world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 1 JN 2:15-17

John tells us to love God before we love the values of this world. Then he reminds us why it is in our strategic best interest to do so. While God is eternal and those who do God will live forever, this world is passing away. Whenever we love this world or attach our things to this world, we attach ourselves to things that are passing. On the other hand when we love God and love people we attach ourselves to what is eternal.

Pray today the prayer of St. Theresa of Avila. Let nothing disturb thee. Let nothing affright thee. All things are passing. Only God remains.

SATURDAY

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

The joyful shout of victory
in the tents of the just.

R. I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me.

"The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD has struck with power."

I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD.

Though the LORD has indeed chastised me,
yet he has not delivered me to death.

R. I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me.

Open to me the gates of justice;
I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD;
the just shall enter it.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and have been my savior.

R. I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me.

Psalms 118

Group Discussion: Week 2 of "Love Lives"

Questions:

1. When introducing yourself, how do you usually identify yourself?
2. What does it mean to you to say that our deepest identity is as a beloved son/daughter of God?
3. God is a loving Father who knows us intimately, how can this knowledge positively impact our prayer?
4. When have you felt love from a person because they have accepted you when others didn't?
5. Why is acceptance such an important expression of love?
6. When has someone shown love for you by challenging you to grow and change?
7. Why is it an important expression of love?
8. What verse, song or image helps you to remember that God is a loving Father?

Scriptures:

- ❖ "See what love the Father has given us that we are called children of God; and so we are." -1 John 3:1a
- ❖ "The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him." -1 John 3:1b
- ❖ "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." -1 John 3:2
- ❖ "And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." -1 John 3:3
- ❖ "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious; anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother." -1 John 3:10