

Sermon Text for April 2, 2017

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Isaiah 53:4-6, Romans 5:6-11

“The Proof of God’s Love”

A number of years back here I’ll never forget a wedding that I did and after the wedding at the reception the father of the bride came up to me and said, if I ever decided to go to church, I would go to your church. But I’ll never go to church. And so, of course, I asked him why not? And he said that was a much longer conversation. I told him I’d love to have that conversation. He said, someday when I see you out in your yard and I’m walking by I’d love to stop by and speak to you about it. And so, sure enough, one day as I was on a 20 foot ladder with my chain saw cutting a branch above my head he stopped by. He said, I just can’t believe in God because I don’t have any proof that God exists. How can you prove to me that God exists?

If someone were to come up to you and ask a very blunt question, such as prove to me that God exists, would you be able to answer that question easily drawing from your own life experiences and so effectively provide an apologetic to your faith? I started speaking about the love of God and how in my life experiences I was able to witness the love of God in very tangible miraculous ways. He bought that, he said you can’t argue against experience. But he still wasn’t able to make that next step.

Today, again in Romans, but drawing from some very important Scriptures in Isaiah we will see proof of God’s amazing love. You know that movie Jerry McGuire the scene with Tom Cruise and the protagonist where they are shouting at each other show me the money, well the world is asking us loudly to show us the proof of God’s amazing love. Let’s look at the proof that we have of God’s amazing love.

READ SCRIPTURE

I think one of the primary proofs of God’s amazing love for me was how he was able to 6 years ago turn life events around in such a way that it allowed me to consider First Presbyterian as a potential call, but the bigger proof was that a group of you was willing to take a chance on this pastor who had more experience overseas than he did in the US. I hope it has worked out for both of us, certainly it did for us. Paul states in verse 8 very simply that God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. This should sound familiar to what Jesus says in John 15:13, No one

has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. We are likely to sacrifice for those that we know and love. What parent wouldn't give their child something that they need even if it means sacrificing something that we have.

WE will lay down our lives for our kids, for our spouses. We will take a certain amount of abuse and kidding from our friends. We will give to causes that spark our interest. We will be less likely to give to a village in Honduras to help them overthrow an oppressive landlord but more likely to give to help them dig a well or build a church.

During the week in our food pantry it is human nature that dictates that we are more than willing and happy to give to those who have a good attitude and are appreciative, but to those who are demanding or rude we tend to hold our helping hand a little closer to our side. What Paul says here in these verses is true. We will rarely, if ever, sacrifice for those that we don't like or don't know, but maybe for someone who likes us we will because of a possible payback that we could foresee in the future.

There was a strange phenomenon that took place during WWII. The British to this day do not speak very highly of the Germans because of the incessant bombings of London and other cities by the Germans during the war. But even in the midst of the war, if a German pilot were shot down and a family were to find him they would not treat him cruelly, but rather they would care for him and feed him and treat him as a son and nurse him back to life.

But Paul states that Jesus went so far, look at verse 10 that even while we were enemies God reconciled us, drew us close to him through the death of God's Son, through Jesus Christ. The proof of God's amazing love is that not only does God love us, but he likes us. Imagine that. Even though we have turned our back on God, God's love continues to shine.

The proof of God's love takes us to Isaiah, read again some of the verses of chapter 53. Jesus was despised, rejected, he carried our diseases, bore our infirmities, wounded for our transgression, crushed for our iniquities, by his mistreatment, we were made whole, completely healed. The Lord in Jesus, shows his love for us, proves his love for us by laying our iniquity, our sin, our warring madness, our angry words, our violent tempers, our substance abuse problems, our disconcern for the poor, he has taken it, healed it, and set us free to love.

You want proof of God's amazing love, look to Jesus Christ, he's all the proof you will ever need. Jesus Christ is God's proof of his amazing love. But don't you also have personal experiences where God's love has shown itself and you are able to say very specifically, this is proof of God's love for us.

There was a little girl who was born with a cleft palate and she grew up hearing people around her say: there's a little girl that only a mother could love. By the time she got to elementary school she had built up around herself a wall of protection that manifested itself by not speaking or saying anything. She would go to her speech therapy class and one teacher after another gave up on her.

Finally there was one teacher who was different from the others. She didn't go over the same worksheets but rather would meet with them one on one. When she met with little Lindsey she had her turn around and face the wall and asked her to answer some questions: What is your favorite animal: a dog, food: pizza, summer activity: swimming. Repeat these words after me, I wish you were my little girl. Lindsey turned around and saw a tear coming down the teacher's eye, and from that day on she learned to talk, to hold her head high. There was no ulterior motive for what God did for us, he didn't owe us anything. The proof of God's amazing love is that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jake, a truck driver, remembered when he was a little boy he was scared to death of the dentist. One day he had to have his tonsils out and it nearly set him into a panic attack to think he was going out and it was just he and the dentist in this small room. As he entered the room the aide could sense that he was nervous and as he got up on the chair the nurse said, I will hold your hand the whole time so that when you wake up, you'll see me by your side smiling. Sure enough, once it was over there she was like an angel holding his hand. He never forgot that. So as he went down the road he saw right in front of him a horrific accident with another truck which flipped over. He stopped his truck and went to the upside down cab and saw a man there alive but pinned and unable to get out. The man was so scared that he was about to go into shock. Jake crawled into that precarious cab that at any moment could have toppled over and crushed both of them, and snuggled right close to the man and said: I'm not going to leave you until you're out of this mess. They had the jaws of life come and finally extracted both of

them from the wreck. The proof of God's amazing love is that while we were yet strangers, God sent his only son to die for us.

Today we are going to take part in communion, a community event that demonstrates to us within these walls, and hopefully to the world the proof of God's amazing love. These elements are the most powerful sign to the world that you can't hold a good man down in the grave. These elements are proof to us during this Lenten season that even in the darkness, the light still conquers and wins. When God singles you out and says I want you to be my child, I am not leaving you until you get out of this mess, and says you are somebody and I have kept your life for a reason, then you feel like you can love somebody else. Look to Jesus Christ and your own life, of experiences for the proof that you need of God's amazing love. Amen.