



## “Resurrection Impact – Blind Love”

Fifth Sunday of Easter  
8:30 & 10:45 a.m. Saturday April 24, 2016  
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Acts 11:1-18; Revelation 21:1-6; John 13:31-35

Grace and peace be to you from God Our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

We're continuing our theme of Resurrection Impact. We're looking how these wonderful scriptures in the Easter Season really help us to see, what do we do after this event of the resurrection. How do we take that event, that singular event in the history of the world and how do we live it, how do we allow it to open up our heart so that it can be a part of our life forever? And so we're going to be doing that today as well.

Harlan Howard wrote a really neat story I want to share with you.

The Cost of Her Love by Harlan Howard

A little boy came up to his mother in the kitchen one evening while she was fixing dinner, and he handed her a piece of paper that he had been writing on. She dried her hands on the apron, and then she read it, and this is what it said:

- For cutting the grass: \$5.00
  - For cleaning up my room this week: \$1.00
  - For going to the store for you: .50
  - For baby-sitting my kid brother while you went shopping: .25
  - For taking out the garbage: \$1.00
  - For getting a good report card: \$5.00
  - For cleaning up and raking the yard: \$2.00
- And then it said total owed: \$14.75

So the mother stood there and after she read the letter she put it back down. You could see that she was thinking what sort of response, so she picked up a pen, turned over the paper that he'd written on, and wrote this:

- For nine months I carried you while you were growing inside me: No Charge.
- For all of the nights that I've sat up with you while you were sick and doctored and prayed for you: No Charge.
- For all of the trying times, and all of the tears that you've caused me over the years: No Charge.
- For the nights that I stayed up worrying about what the future would bring: No Charge.
- For all of the toys, the food, the clothes, and even wiping your nose: No Charge.
- When you add it all up, the cost of my love: No Charge.

The boy finished reading what his mother had written, a little tear kind of came to his eye, he picked up the pen and then he wrote on the side that he had originally written: "PAID IN FULL". And then he looked at his mother and he said, "Mom I sure do love you."

You know love is at the center of our Christian faith. And the gospel that Jesus gives to each one of us and to the world frees us to live the kind of life and to share the kind of love that Jesus wants. But often we take that love and people have been beaten because of it. We have thrown insults to another human being created in the image of God in the name of that love. People had been burned at the stake for that love. Is that the kind of love that Jesus lived? Is that the kind of love that he shared with his disciples? Is that the kind of love that was on the cross, forgiving everyone including his accusers and those who had put him there.

How if we're really honest we know it's hard to love. It's hard enough to love our family, especially our in-laws. It's hard enough to love the people that we care about. But what about the people who hurt us, or the people who have said things bad about us, or what about the people that we don't know, or the people who are different from us?

These readings from the Bible give us a chance to **consider how God calls us to love unconditionally, without judgment, without prejudice**, and that's called "blind love."

When Jesus was with his disciples in the upper room before his arrest and before his passion, Jesus decides to take the time to teach his disciples about love. Now think of the context of what's going on. He chooses that topic in the midst of everything that's about to happen, everything that we know of in Holy week. Judas at this point is on his way to betray Jesus. Peter in only a little while, a matter of hours, is going to betray him. And it is in this moment that Jesus wants to teach his disciples a new commandment.

Now there's nothing unusual about this commandment, to love one another, but Jesus teaches it in a different way because of the time that he is in, and in the close proximity it is to his passion and death. He wants to tell his disciples about how important love is. Not only the love of God which is going to be shown in his death and resurrection, but also in the love that they should share for one another. And he does that because, quite frankly, love makes God happy. It's a part of his very nature. John says God is love. And to be able to teach his disciples about that love is his ability to be able to share his very self, his very nature, his very character with the disciples that he cares about.

It's interesting; John uses this word glory in the context of that reading. When Jesus had gone out, he said, "The Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once." Glory, glory, glory, glory! Jesus is overwhelmed with glory in this moment. Right before his betrayal and death he was exulted on the cross and in that empty tomb. He is glorified by this singular event of salvation for you and for me.

And that resurrection will inaugurate a whole new era for the church. For Jesus is forming a new community right here, right now. One of mutual love, of blind love! Loving brothers and sisters not because they deserve it but because they're, well, brothers and sisters. Because Christ first loved us and now Christ wants to encourage the disciples and you and me to love one another.

And notice what John tells us right at the end, **they will know that you are disciples by that love.** Think about that.

It's not coming here to church, it's not necessarily being regular in worship, it's not lifting up one of our Creeds, it's not even being involved in service. No, they will know you are my disciples by your capacity to love.

When my kids come to visit, I always enjoy being with them and I love taking them out to church services or public places where people are, and they see me and they see my kids, and it is always nice to get that comment about how my kids look like me or they resemble me, or I can tell who your dad is, those sorts of comments. But you know what I hope; I hope that people don't say that just because my kids are giants, you know. I hope it's not because they look like me. I hope it's because they see a little bit of me, my character in my kids. I hope it's because they see the love that I have for Jesus and the love that I have for God's people, I hope they can see that in my kids. I hope they'll know that they're mine because of not what I look like, but because of who I am. I hope they see the character and the love.

So Jesus is sharing his life with his disciples. He's sharing that life with you and me and the love that he's giving us is self-giving. It's humble. It's a serving love. And through that love people will be able to know and be able to see Jesus in you and in me when we live and when we love like Jesus loved. And that love by the way is meant to be an expansive love. It's meant to be bigger than you and I can imagine.

Peter has a vision in the early church. Now at this time the early church was really compact. It basically was a sect of the Jewish faith. And when Peter has his vision and he sees that God's love is so expansive that it's going to burst forth, it's going to go beyond just this small group of Jewish Christians, but it's going to engage the whole world, all of the Gentiles, all of those who are created in God's image. We see that that love is expansive and that even Peter's sense of mission and ministry and the love that Jesus has for him can expand to include more and more and more. That is a gift of the Holy Spirit to Peter and to the church. And that same Spirit inspires us in faith opens us up to love, breaks down the barriers that we might place before brothers and sisters in our world.

And so there's an invitation for us to be open to that Holy Spirit. Whether it's being open to a fellow parishioner, or to a guest at worship, or a neighbor down the street.

And it's okay, it's okay if it seems too overwhelming. It's okay if you're not sure about what the next steps are, or how you should act. Do what comes natural. Do what Jesus would do, copy him. Copy Jesus, love the way Jesus loved. Love with a servant's heart exemplified in the washing of feet.

When you do that you don't love because you're equals, you place yourself in the role of a servant, you lower yourself. You allow that love to be blind so that it can be all about the other, the other person and when you and I do that brothers and sisters as a community in Christ, that love will strengthen us. That will be a binding love where you and I can have resurrection impact in everything that we do. It will be a blind love that can change the world.

Amen

In the name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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