

## Weekly Sermon – 17.05.2020

### Sixth Sunday of Easter - *John 14:15-21*

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

Jesus said 'If you love me you will keep my commandments'.

We are created in love and love is a very very powerful emotion. The thing is, most of us have a somewhat different view of love to others. It's inherent in our makeup but there are times when we walk away from it. I guess one of the particularly important things here is to know what we mean by love.

Two young people were at the lookout on Mount Cootha one night over-looking the lights of Brisbane. The girl turned to the boy and said, 'Herman do you love me'? He replied 'yes'. She followed up with 'would you die for me' he said 'no, mine is an undying love'. It's a silly little story but emphasise for us some of the meanings of love. Do we look for love in order to gain from it? I guess we could all answer yes to that, because the pure thing we all hope to gain from love is love itself. Everyone desires to be loved in a very powerful way but not everybody is able to say that they have found that in their lives. Some parents have to use tough love with their children. This can be a difficult thing but if that tough love is misdirected, it can leave a permanent mark on that particular child. All children expect love from their parents however not all parents realise they will be loved by their children. Many people over the years, have tried to demand love to satisfy their own needs rather than to give it in a Godly sense. Perfect love casts out all fear.

Jesus offered perfect love during his ministry and particularly on the cross. Human beings try to show great love for their families but because we are imperfect beings, we tend quite often to fall short. In the animal kingdom parents will put themselves in all sorts of danger just to protect their young. They teach their young survival skills but when the time is right, they encourage their offspring to leave the nest and to go their own way as nature requires.

Some humans find it awfully hard to give up the comfort of their parent's home, and this is not always because they love their parents beyond anything that they can imagine. We must be very careful that we don't use love as a convenience. It can be the sort of convenience that allows us to benefit far more than the people who we are supposed to love. As I said before, perfect love cast out fear. Many years ago, a young lady was driving home from shopping when she stalled her little car on a railway crossing. In her panic, when the car wouldn't start, she got out of the car to try and push it across the level crossing. The problem was, she had left the car in gear, so pushing it was a very difficult thing to try and do. People called to her to leave the car, but she refused, and she was killed along with her infant child in the back seat. She would not leave her child regardless of the danger it posed to herself. I think we have to be in that type of situation before we can begin to understand the love emotion that that young lady felt. We can say we would do anything to protect our loved ones, but we don't always know how far we can go with that until we are put to the test.

Jesus died on the cross so that we might have eternal life. This is a very powerful love. I wonder how many of us who proclaim love, really stop to think what that means. Is it something that we can fulfil to the nth degree should the occasion arise? Are we strong enough? I guess we find that out only when we are confronted by the necessity to act in someone else's favour.

Jesus knew when he died on the cross that his disciples would not totally stand by him. Nevertheless, he went through with it. Sometimes I wonder if he wasn't tempted, when he was on the cross, to look down at the very few people gathered around and say something like 'I think I should leave this for another day when more people turn up'. It really does impress upon us the concept of 'when two or three are gathered together there am I in the midst of them'. We can never imagine the love which bought Jesus from his throne to the countryside of Judea. We cannot imagine the sense of failure he may have been tempted to feel when people did not understand what he was saying. Each and every one of us has to go through a certain amount of rejection in order to understand fully what we know about love, and to allow people to love us back the way they do. When we are able to come together again on a Sunday in our church, I wonder what a difference there will be in the way we relate to each other. I have been very grateful to Zoom, which has allowed me to see and speak with friends, brothers and sisters, from our own church. I believe, when we are able to face each other in the real sense, it will be a great rejoicing, that will allow us to connect with the members of our congregation whom we love so much. I thank God very regularly for the thousands of friends I have found over the years because of my involvement in church. Even the people who I didn't know well will sometimes come up to me and say things like, 'remember when we did this or that back in 1975'. Most of the time I can't remember, but I'm very grateful that for them, it has left a lasting impression.

Jesus death on the cross leaves a very lasting impression for us all. May we be prepared to accept the love he offers and return it to the best of our ability. This is no mean task but at least we do have the example. May God be with you all as you attempt this difficult task. I don't think any of us achieve perfectly in this. I certainly don't, but that does not prevent my continuing gratitude for the sacrifice that was made for all of us. Serious things like the Corona Virus help us to stop and evaluate our role in this life. As tragic as it is, the virus is something that we can live through and learn from. As we deal with tragedies of this nature, it will be important for us all to realise how blessed we are in the life that we lead and hopefully encourage us to be more aware of the need for us to reassess our contribution, in light of the things that we learn day by day.

With love to you all. Amen