

Sermon for Sunday, September 8, 2019 - "Love Reminders"

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Rally Sunday

September 8, 2019

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Decorah, Iowa

Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus.

Jesus tells us to love God and others with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. He says this is what God most wants from us and for us. As Jesus describes it, love isn't just a feeling. It's a choice and an action. Love involves conscious, active intentional work. Yet, it can be hard to remember to choose love and to live it out.

God knows this. God knows we need real, tangible help with this work. So, God told the people of Israel to put concrete reminders to love on their hands and foreheads, doorposts and gates.

These days we have all sorts of tools to remind us to do things. Some people write notes on their hands; others put post-it notes up everywhere or set alerts on their phones. Kids - many of you probably have checklists at home to remind you of your chores. Wouldn't it be great if we used those tools to encourage us to love? What if each morning, as everyone's rushing to get out the door, a daily alert came through that just said LOVE? Would that change the morning? I wonder and I might try that this week.

Yet, even without a post-it note, checklist or phone alert, there are so many concrete things in our lives that can serve as encouragement to practice love.

I see a lot of them around this building. The Reconciling in Christ logo on our doors, for instance - the visible sign that this congregation has intentionally chosen to welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer people - encourages me to live out that commitment by my actions.

Our new fully accessible bathroom calls to mind this congregation's long commitment to those with special needs and reminds me that showing love involves concrete action.

As I walk around, I see baskets to collect items for the Food Pantry and supplies for school kits that will be given to children around the world, as well as thank you notes from all the ministries we support through our financial gifts. All serve as good encouragement to live out our faith and love in concrete ways.

When I see Al-Anon, Friends of Recovery, and Narcotics Anonymous groups meeting here, I'm reminded to love and pray for those who struggle with addiction. And, I'm grateful because lessons from 12-step programs can help us all to love more fully.

When I see the building being used to accompany our immigrant neighbors, I'm reminded that Jesus says if we welcome strangers we welcome him. We love God by loving all of God's children.

The Kinderhaus preschool that rents our space teaches me what love sounds like. It sounds like singing, laughter, kind words, and teachers who so gently redirect and comfort. Every time I hear those teachers working with a kid, I get a lesson in patience.

And then when you all come on Sundays, I see so many reminders to actively practice love. I see Karl Jacobsen and his therapy dog, Scotty, and I'm reminded to pray and advocate for people with diabetes - especially because insulin and supplies are so terribly expensive right now. I see people who've lost loved ones and need us to stay with them for the long haul of grief. I see all your faces and think about the joy and pain you all carry - some of which I am privileged to carry with you.

I'm reminded how much we all need loving, caring community and how much we need help and encouragement to practice love for real people in real time. It's hard work to keep loving people year after year in community. All the minor annoyances, all the larger disagreements can take a toll. Yet we keep showing up, week after week, to practice love

In so many ways here, we are reminded to live out love of God and love of neighbor.

And here we are given very concrete reminders that we are so very loved by God. We are given bread and wine, Jesus' body and blood - given so that we will always know God's love for us deep in our bones. We are given symbols and rituals, words and songs that we can repeat again and again to assure us that God has a hold of us; and God will not let us go.

Then we are sent out to 'do' love in the world. It is harder out there because we live in a world that has constant pressure to consume, to compete, and far fewer things that encourage us to love. Yet, still God is at work in our daily lives to get our attention and help us practice love.

God gets my attention through my coffee pot. I'm a morning person and don't need coffee right when I get up in the morning. Yet, my beloved spouse does appreciate it pretty quickly. He shows love in lots of small acts of kindness and I want to do the same. So, I make it a priority to get the coffee made even if I'm going to wait a while to drink it. The coffee pot reminds me to do small, kind things throughout the day.

God also gets my attention through text messages from friends who send love and support. Those remind me to give those same kinds of messages to my kids.

What helps you to love? What else might serve to encourage you?

Jesus commands us to love God and others with our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Here we are given what we need to do that.

Here we are sent out to join God in the work of loving the world.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.