TITLE: A Valentine from God

Hymn: Love Divine -- Jesus Loves me

TEXT: Jn 3:16 & 21:15-17 & 15:13; 1st Co. 13:1-8, 13;

Gal. 2:20; Ephe. 3:17-19

INTRODUCTION: Today is Valentine’s Day. Guys, you have your reminder and are without excuse.

 Valentine’s Day really doesn’t hold as much religious significance as it once may have…

**Saint Valentine’s Day** is a holiday honoring lovers. It is celebrated February 14 by the custom of sending greeting cards or gifts to express affection. The cards, known as valentines, are often designed with hearts to symbolize love. The holiday itself probably derives from the ancient Roman feast of Lupercalis (February 15). The festival gradually became associated with the feast day of two Roman martyrs, both named St. Valentine, who lived in the 3rd century. St. Valentine has traditionally been regarded as the patron saint of lovers.[[1]](#footnote-1)

***WORD HISTORY:*** Geoffrey Chaucer should perhaps receive honor as the real Saint Valentine. Although reference books abound with mention of Roman festivals from which Valentine's Day—the day for lovers—may be derived, Jack B. Oruch has shown that no evidence exists to support these connections and that Chaucer is most likely the first to link the saint's day with the custom of choosing sweethearts. No link between valentine’s day and lovers exists before the time of Chaucer and several literary contemporaries who also mention it, but after them the link becomes widespread, a circumstance that makes it seem likely that Chaucer, the most imaginative of the group, invented the tradition. The fullest and perhaps earliest description of the tradition occurs in Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules,* composed around 1380, which takes place “on Seynt Valentynes day, where Chaucer wrote, “Whan every foul cometh there to chese [choose] his make [mate].”

 Any religious significance to the holiday, I believe, would have to be found buried within the concept of the word love. The concept of the one who loves expressing that love to the one loved.

 The religious connection to Saint Valentines Day is that it was a day pronounced by the early Church to honor a man named Valentine who was martyred for his faith

**Martyr …**

**One who chooses to suffer death rather than renounce religious principles**. **One who makes great sacrifices or suffers much in order to further a belief, cause, or principle.**

 The reason that Valentine was martyred was

 because of his faith in and love for Christ.

 The valentines that we send today represent the love and affection that we have for the ones we send them to.

 A Valentine is an expression of love by the one who sends it.

 This morning I want to talk about the greatest of all Valentines.

 An expression of love that goes far beyond anything that we can ever fully understand or comprehend…

 The Valentine that God sent you and I just over 2021 years ago….

 **John 3:16 (NIV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

This speaks of the valentine God sent…

**For God so loved the world that he gave (He sent) his one and only Son!**

 God so loved the world, He so loves you and I, that He send us His one and only Son to come and give His life, come and die for our sins, so that we wouldn’t have to die in our sin.

We sang about this a few moments ago….

 That great old hymn by Charles Wesley…

Love Divine, all loves excelling, Joy of Heaven to Earth come down! Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, All Thy faithful mercies crown!

 The other Hymn that we sand this morning, Jesus Loves Me, in all of its childlike simplicity, speaks of Ag-ah-pay love and holds the greatest and deepest of all theological truths--- **Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!**

 The story is told of a brilliant professor at Princeton Seminary who always left his graduating class with these words: *“Gentlemen, there is still much in this world and in the Bible that I do not understand, but of one thing I am certain-- Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so…and gentlemen, that is sufficient!*

 Anna Warner wrote Jesus Loves me in collaboration with her sister Susan. It was part of their novel “Say and Seal”, one of the best selling books of that day. Today, few individuals would know or remember the plot of that story, which once stirred and touched the hearts of so many readers.

 Within the book was this simple poem spoken by one of the characters, Mr. Linden, as he comforts Johnny Fax, a dying child…

 *Jesus loves me! This I know for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong!*

 *Jesus loves me! Loves me still. Tho I’m weak and very ill, that I might from sin be freed, bled and died upon the tree!*

*Jesus loves me! He who died, Heavens gate to open wide; He will wash away my sin, let His little child come in!*

 *Jesus loves me! He will stay, close beside me all the way. Thou has bled and died for me; I will henceforth live for thee!*

 One of the leading contributors to the development of early Gospel music in America, The composer, William Bradbury, in 1861 composed the music for Anna Warner’s text and personally added the chorus to her four stanza’s.

 *Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so!*

 The deepest of all theological truths but yet simple enough for the smallest of children to grasp…Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!

 There is something special and heartwarming when little children sing this song--- But you know what I have found is even more special and heartwarming?

 Occasionally when Pam and I used to do nursing home services we would sing this song.

 And as special as this song is when it is sung by young children it becomes even more special when sung by the elderly, by those at the other end of life’s spectrum…

 At the nursing homes I have stood in front of people, many in wheel chairs, sometimes those sitting there are very despondent, just sitting there and you don’t know if they even hear what you are saying..

 When we start to sing the hymns some will join in and some will not…Yet it seems when we sing this song often you will see their faces light up, a warm contemplating smile comes upon their face and most all of them will sing and you can just see that they are singing from their heart… Jesus Loves Me This I know for the Bible tells me so, little ones to Him belong…they are weak but He is strong… Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me…The Bible tells me so!

 To little children this is a truth that they are just starting to learn… For many of these gray haired ones it is a truth that has been lived out and experienced..

 And its truths are just as true and reassuring whether it is at the beginning of life’s journey or at the end of it.

 **Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!**

 And whether at the beginning of life’s journey or at the end of it in our old age, if we are a Christian, the simple fact is that we will always be a child in Gods eyes, and He loves us with the greatest of all love! He loves us with ag-ah-pay love!

(I would like to play a song this morning by Ray Boltz that emphasis this truth called Always be A Child)

 Do you take comfort this morning in knowing that you will always be a child in the eyes of God and that He loves you with the greatest of all loves?

 The central theme of Scripture is that God loves us and He loves us with the greatest of all love!

 There are several words used in scripture that describe love…

 Probably The most used are:

**#25 agapao {ag-ap-ah'-o} (General-social)**

**1) of persons, to welcome, to entertain,**

**5360 philadelphia {fil-ad-el-fee'-ah} brotherly**

**1) love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love**

 **25 5368 phileo {fil-eh'-o}(Affectionate-Passionate - romantic)**

**1) to love, to approve of, to like, sanction**

**1d) to treat affectionately, to show signs of love,**

**to kiss**

**26 agape {ag-ah'-pay} (God Love)**

**1) affection, good will, love, benevolence**

**2) love feasts…**

 In Scripture there is an interesting exchange of words between Peter and the Lord Jesus that illustrate the different degrees of love…

 After Peter’s denial of Christ and after Christ had risen from the dead prior to His ascending to Heaven

**John 21:15 (NIV) When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"**

**"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."**

**Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."**

**16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"**

**He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."**

**Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."**

**17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"**

**Peter said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."**

**Jesus said, "Feed my sheep.**

 There is something very interesting that takes place here in the different words that were used for love.

 Jesus starts out using one word and Peter responds with a different one…

Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

What is interesting here is the word that Jesus chose to use for love! He uses: {ag-ap-ah'-o}-General-social-casual love.

 Equally interesting is Peter’s response!

**"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."**

 The word that Peter uses for love is not the one his lord just used! He uses: phileo {fil-eh'-o} -Affectionate-Passionate –love)

**16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"**

Again Jesus uses the word {ag-ap-ah'-o}!

**Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."**

Again in response Peter uses the word (fil-eh'-o}

 The first two times that the Lord says to Peter, "Do you love me?" he uses the Greek word {ag-ap-ah'-o for love, and when Peter replies, he uses the Greek word (fil-eh'-o} for love.

This third time Jesus uses the word that Peter used for love.. Fil-eh’-o.

**17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"**

The distinction between these two Greek words as used here is described by a respected theologian named Trench:, He says: {ag-ap-ah'-o} speaks more of judgment and deliberate choice; fil-eh'-o speaks more of attachment and personal affection.

 Thus when Jesus used the word (ag-ap-ah-o) for love, Peter, at this moment, took it as too cold a word!

 It was as though his Lord were keeping him at a distance, or at least not inviting him to draw near, as was the passionate yearning and desire of Peter’s heart to now do.

 So in response to Jesus question Peter sets aside the word Jesus uses and substitutes his own stronger word for love, fil-eh’-o, in its place!

A second time Jesus does the same thing!

Simon to you love me? Jesus again uses the word Ag-ap-ah-o!

Peter again sets aside the word his Lord used and substitutes his own!

 Yes Lord I love you! Again he substitutes the word fil-eh-o!

 And now finally Peter has conquered, he has broken through; for when the Lord asks a third time whether Peter loves him, Jesus does it with the only word which will satisfy Peter .

 Jesus says, Simon, do you love me! And this time Jesus uses the word fil-eh-o!

 This word alone claimed from Jesus that personal attachment and affection with which was in the heart of Peter!

 You see, the love that Peter had for Jesus was not just a socially accepting kind of love. The love that Peter had for Jesus was so much deeper, so much more! It was a love of attachment and personal affection.

 Peter was hurt by Jesus using a lesser word to describe the love that Peter actually had for Jesus.

 Jesus saw the sincerity of Peter’s heart and He saw the sincerity and degree of Peter’s love for Him.

 The first two times that Jesus asked the question He used the word that had described the love that Peter had had for Jesus when he denied Him…. After a heartbreaking repentance Peter’s love had changed from merely Ag-ap-ah-o to a fil-eh-o love!

 The words that healed Peter’s broken heart after being the one who denied his Lord was when he was allowed to confess his love for Jesus with the word fil-eh-o and have Jesus responded in kind….

 It was then that Peter knew that he was forgiven and restored into the intimate relationship with Jesus that he so desired to have!

 Peter do you love me! Yes Lord, you know that I love you! And now I know that You know that I love you!

 It was that final exchange of words when Jesus used the word fil-eh’-o for love that Peter was healed and restored into intimate relationship and fellowship with his Lord.

 Peter was restored in relationship and went on to do great things for Gods Kingdom.

 As great a love as that is, a love of attachment and personal affection and passion of relationship, there is a love that is even greater!

 And that is ag-ah-pay!

 Ag-ah-pay is God’s love! Ag-ah-pay is a love that finds its origin, its source only in God!

 It is the word that Jesus uses in John 15:13 when He says:

**John 15:13 (NIV) Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**

 You see, ag-ah-pay, is love in its highest degree of love, love in its purest form!

 It is sacrificial love! A love that always puts others above self….It is a love that will always cost you something! Possibly even cost you everything!

 It is this love that enabled God to send His one and only Son to die as a sacrifice for your and my sins!

And It is this love that we are to strive to attain in our life and relationship with Christ!

 It is this kind of love that Paul talks about when speaking to, you and I, the Church in:

**1Cor 13:1 (NIV) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.**

**2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.**

**3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.**

And then Paul goes on and tells us what love, ag-ah-pay love is…..

**4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.**

**5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.**

**6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.**

**7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always** **perseveres.**

8 Love never fails.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

 In each instance Paul uses the Word ag-ah-pay for love here! God’s love!

 This is the kind of love, the degree of love that we are to strive for as a Christian…

 This is the love that we are called to manifest in our lives-- Ag-ah-pay! God’s Love!

 It is love in its highest degree and it is a love that is impossible for us to fully have!

 Well, if ag-ah-pay love is impossible for us to have then how can we be expected by God to manifest ag-ah-pay love in our lives?

 We can’t manifest ag-ah-pay love in and of ourselves!

 It is God’s love and it must be God who manifests it through us or in us!

 That can only happen one way and that is as we totally empty ourselves of self and commit our life completely to God!

 We will only start to manifest this highest degree of love in our lives as we come to the place that the Apostle Paul did when he said:

Gala 2:20 (NIV) I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

 The apostle Paul has these words for you and I today that are just as true as the day that he spoke them…

 **Ephe 3:17 (NIV) …And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, (ag-ah-pay)**

18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

**19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**

We will only come to be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God when we have come to know and embrace and manifest this love that Paul says surpasses knowledge and understanding…

 When we come to know and show ag-ah-pay love, Gods love made manifest in our life through our total and complete surrender to Him..

 Ag-ah-pay is a love that is only possible for us to have when we come to the place of complete surrender to God.

 Come to that place of saying and meaning, none the less Lord, not my will but Your will be done in my life.

 The love that God has called us to, the love that will make a difference in our world is His love, ag-ah-pay love, and we will only come to love with that kind of love one way, and that is by total and complete surrender of our life to Him.

 Coming to the place of allowing Him to manifest His love through us.

 Have we come to that place of love in our life this morning?

 Have we come to the place of complete surrender so that His love can be made real in our life?

 Are we living our life if the full knowledge and acceptance of this Biblical truth:

**Jesus Loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so?**

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)