

Sermon Notes: November 10, 2019 **Focus:** Love **Readings:**

<https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearABC/SpecServ/Marriage.html> (Tobit, 1 cor 13, John 15)

Love is awesome! The church has succeeded! For the most part, we have convinced people that they are loved unconditionally. For that, I am thankful. In Western cultures, gone is scraping knees up cathedral steps to earn worthiness before God. Gone is clergy flattening themselves prostrate before the Altar. Even the few Baptist people I know rarely feel existential guilt anymore if they haven't had their 30 minutes of quiet time in the morning.

This shift is especially true, I believe, in kids. I have not met any kid who thinks they are damnation worthy. I don't need saving because there's nothing to be saved from. At the same time, I don't want to discount real and profound suffering. Agony and loneliness are worse and far more fearsome in a 17-year-old than any of the guilt and self flagellation I practiced in my younger days. Furthermore, Junior High can still defeat the sense of unconditional love in anybody! Junior high aside, I don't think I can overstate how our understanding of faithfulness, worthiness and love has changed in the last 15 years - for everybody.

Priesthood I was trained to be the "worker of mysteries" so that those who come would find comfort in a God who loves them. All of my pastoral sensibilities are bent toward telling you how much God loves you no- matter- what. That's still where I land and that was the church's secret sauce. But I have a strong suspicion that most under 40 think they are inherently lovable / fundamentally good. They may not be happy. They may not have achieved every goal, but the sense of being unlovely it not a crisis point for them.

Addiction and Mental Illness The people who do keenly see gaps in love are addicts - drug, sex, alcohol, love, food, etc. Also, the mentally ill are forced back into the basics of God's love in their life Both have, or will have, hit a wall, only to realize they are ill equipped to manage life on their own power. Everything is not awesome — to misquote the Lego Movie. Everything, including the core identity, is not awesome.

LEGO clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cQgQIMlwWw>. They, we, need some love from outside of themselves – From God.

I very much do **not** want to go back to a world where love is only dispensed through the cross. I can't affirm that love is only valuable when we grovel enough, pray enough, or think the right things. At the same time, I'm not sure if we're a whole lot better today. I won't affirm our zeitgeist that the only people who are worthy are those who have the right political party, are the most devoted to recycling, or "out march" everyone else. I share many commitments toward the environment, gender equity, and queer equality, but I have seen the Bay Area get righteously overheated too often for my taste,

I think God's love is so much more effective than anything that we create. Love is the driver outside ourselves — Love impels holy curiosity in the other — Love makes us who we are in God. Thank God most of don't trudge around with heavy sandbags of guilt. Nonetheless we still have to walk forward on a journey. Let's walk towards each other, be curious about each other, and celebrate the immortal vessels of love that we are.

Todd