

# St Martins C3 – October 6, 2024

## Under Construction – Sacrificial Love

### Sermon Summary:

We wouldn't know what God's love is like unless God revealed it to us. In Christ, God did exactly that. God revealed the type of love that He wants to develop in us. In Romans 5:8, we read, "*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" What Paul is describing here is that the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross is the ultimate expression of true Godly love. What Christ revealed about God's love, is that it is a *sacrificial* love. Therefore, what God means by us loving others, is choosing to do what is best for the other person, which (like Christ) will mean some sacrifice on our part, in order to achieve what is best for them.

**Read: 1 Cor 13:4-7**

**Because it is God's nature to love, He is will always be seeking to give you a greater revelation of what His love for you and others looks like.**

Here are some of the ways God forms His love in us and uses that to bring His love to the world around us:

### **1) God will expose our true motivations. (Jn 21 & Lk 15)**

Even when we encounter the greatest love in the universe, we may still miss the full experience of God's love, because our focus is on ourselves. We miss experiencing God's love, because we are inherently selfish. Selfish people are not sacrificial people. God will remove our selfish attitude as we surrender what we feel we

have a right to have in our lives and trust in what God chooses to give us.

**2) God will reveal how much He loves you and those around you.**

God wants you to know how much He loves you. Therefore, ask God to reveal His love to you. It's a prayer He will answer. We can only give what we have received. We need to receive God's love, in order to give it to others. God's love is received in prayer, worship, reflection on what He has revealed in His word and through connections with others in God's family.

**3) God will empower you to love others.**

As our selfishness is reduced and God's perspective on sacrificial love is gained, a desire to love others grows. This work of God's Spirit grows in us as our heart is shaped by God's heart.

**4) Share the journey of growing in God's love, with someone you are in a growth relationship with.**

This helps you reflect on what God's love looks like. It also helps you refine what practically working this out in your life looks like.

**The Result:** As we cooperate with the work of God's Spirit forming Christlike love in our lives, other Godly attitudes also emerge.

**Read: Galatians 5:13-25**

**Take Action:** Let us take the next step in loving like Christ, by surrendering ourselves fully to Him. Letting go of what we want (our selfishness) and trusting in all that God wants to do in us and through us.

## **Suggested questions for Connect Group discussion:**

- 1) What do we learn about what God's love is like, from the life and death of Jesus?*
- 2) What are some examples, from your Christian walk, as to how God has revealed His love to you?*
- 3) Why are we so selfish, and what is God calling us to do with our selfishness?*
- 4) What might a greater revelation of God's love for you look like?*
- 5) What might God using you to bring His love to others look like?*

## Monday's Devotion – Destructive selfishness

### 2 Samuel 12:13

*Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."*

The context of this passage is the prophet Nathan challenging King David for sinning against God by committing both murder and adultery. David's response was to own up and repent. Pleading God to forgive him and to not remove His blessing from his life. (Psalm 52)

As we explored on Sunday, the opposite of internalising God's love in our lives is giving in to our selfish desires. What David (and our life experience) proves, is that selfishness is destructive. It seems to give you what you need in the moment, but it weakens us morally and has very negative consequences with those we are in relationship with.

Put simply, the presence of God's love in our lives is constructive and the presence of selfishness in our lives is destructive. King David's actions here are just one example of this, which we can learn from.

So, where in your life, do you see selfishness creeping in? – Sometimes it's hard for us to identify, because we justify our attitudes and actions, claiming we "deserve" whatever it is we are going after. However, if we take some time and courageously pray that God will reveal when and where selfishness is creeping in, God's Spirit will expose what needs to be exposed and we will avoid some unnecessary pain in our lives.

## Tuesday's Devotion – Good mental health

### Jonah 4:1-4

*But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"*

Jonah's attitude here seems to be ridiculous. God has just used Jonah to save Nineveh, and Jonah is upset about it. So, upset that he asks God to take his life. Jonah was in a bad space mentally. But why? From the rest of the account, we learn that Jonah was cooperating with God's purposes out of reluctant obligation, not out of love for God and others. Therefore, Jonah saw his job as a prophet of doom, where he brings the word of God to the city and then sits up on the hill and watches it burn. God changes the plan and reveals His love for both Nineveh and Jonah.

There are two big insights that stand out for me in this:

- 1) There is a direct link between good mental health and internalising God's love for ourselves, and others. When we set aside a loving perspective we are very susceptible to interpreting situations around us very badly.
- 2) We can be obeying God's purposes, but if we are doing that with the wrong motivation, it can lead to despair. Yes, we ought to serve God's purposes in the world, but always from a foundation of love.

## **Wednesday's Devotion – It is worth the effort.**

### **Judges 8:28**

*Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon's lifetime, the land had peace forty years.*

Gideon was a reluctant leader. In his younger days, God had called Gideon to stop keeping to himself and his business and serve God and His purposes. Not out of anything that he might gain personally, but out of a love for God and the people of Israel.

At the time Gideon and Israel were living under fear, persecution, and poverty. Life was not good. God seemed to have abandoned them. So, they reluctantly accepted their situation and put up with the Midianites controlling them.

It took some convincing, but eventually Gideon had a change of heart. Throughout his life, he developed a love for God, God's purposes, and God's people. In focusing outside of himself, God anointed him to deliver Israel from the Midianites and they enjoyed peace for the next forty years.

Sometimes just focusing on ourselves seems a lot easier. We might know that loving God and others is the right thing to do, but sometimes we wonder whether it is worth the effort. Gideon, along with many others, would affirm that love is always worth it. Much is achieved when God's love is present in our hearts and the relationships around our lives. It could be argued that nothing of Godly substance is achieved without love.

## Thursday's Devotion – Love expands our perspective.

### Acts 11:17-18

*So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."*

While the disciples were with Jesus during his three years of ministry, they came to realise that Jesus' life and ministry was powerful and life-changing for those He ministered to. After Jesus left and the Holy Spirit came upon the church, they began to believe that God's Kingdom and the church could expand out from Jerusalem and have a significant impact on the nation of Israel. However, because of previously held beliefs about God not accepting Gentiles, they could never imagine churches being established around the whole world.

Peter's vision of the unclean animals and his subsequent experience of God blessing Cornelius' household led Peter to believe that God's love and God's purposes were much greater than he could imagine. God truly did love the whole world, not just the Jewish world. God not only loved him, but God also loves everyone.

Internalising God's love expands our perspective. So, consider today where you think the limits of God's love are? Then, consider are those limits in your mind because of previously held beliefs or are they based on what God has revealed? God's love for others is broader and deeper than you can imagine.

## Friday's Devotion – Openness to God qualifies you.

### John 4:27

*Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"*

At the start of the week we explored how destructive selfishness can be and how constructive it is to love God's way. So, if we continued to follow God's way of love, what would change in us and the world around us?

I like how accurately John records what happens in this situation where Jesus is talking with a Samaritan woman. The disciples don't openly question why Jesus is doing something which they have been taught by their religion and culture as being wrong, but they are certainly judging Jesus in their minds.

As it turns out, not only is this woman's life changed, but her town and others in Samaria come to follow Jesus. This pattern of loving those others had rejected is repeated many times over in Jesus' ministry. Revealing that God's love for the world is broad and those who receive it, are not necessarily the religious types, but those who are open to God and His ways.

The end result of us internalising God's love and extending that love to the world around us, will surprise us. It will truly transform people's lives, particularly those who are open. May God lead us to those who are open and willing to receive His love, so that God's Kingdom may expand exponentially around us.