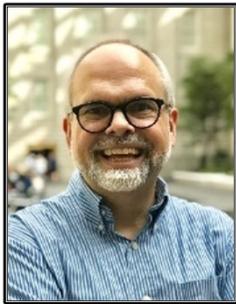




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“For the Love of Christ”

“[Jesus] said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” (John 21:16)



Dear Friends in Christ,

After year and a half or more of having life continually re-arranged by COVID, you, like me, may have a **yearning for something that looks like “normal”** whatever that may mean. It is natural when life seems to have come unanchored to want to get back to life as usual (as if there is ever a usual).

Of course, this desire is not anything new. In the very last chapter of the Gospel According to John, we see this urge to go back to “the life known before” at work in Peter. He is a fisherman, and he goes back to what he knows. But the truth is he knows more at this point in the telling of the story, as a result of his encounters with Jesus. He is not the same person he was before he encountered the Christ. Jesus has taught with his words and his life what love the love, capital “L” really looks like in the human experience and what it is capable of.

John reminds us in his telling of the Gospel story that **Love will search us** out even in what seems like the last chapter. Despite the urge to return only to the life that was known, this Love that is God made known in Jesus Christ comes searching for Peter (and for you and for me). This is good news because it means we are not left to ourselves.

Yet there is something more. This same Love that keeps searching us out also calls us to an ever-renewed vocation to love. This is not the love that is often confused with simply liking of something or someone. It is *agape*, which in Greek describes the energy and spirit of God that seeks the other’s greatest good. It is the love of God at work in each of us (if we will consent to it) that the Apostle Paul describes in the “Hymn of Love” chapter we know as First Corinthians 13 – “Love is patient and kind, it is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way...”. Likely you know the rest of this passage by heart.

This is the Love that calls to Peter in the last chapter of John’s gospel. Likely you remember this call which comes in the form of questions from Jesus to Peter, “Do you love me?” which is repeated three times in the last chapter of the Gospel according to John. Each time Peter affirms his love and is given a calling from Jesus to tend or feed the sheep.

To love is to act for the good of others, as our first thought. So, my friends, **I urge us all in this season, when we yearn for some normalcy, to get vaccinated as an act of Christ-love for others.** If you have already done so, bless you. If you have not and are able to do so, I urge you in love to please do so. It will help those who are not able for health reasons to receive the vaccine. The science is clear. This will aid you if you should happen to get COVID. Even more it will slow the spread of the Delta variant which as I write this to you is rising. I appeal to you, if you are able, to do this as an act of Christ-love. The need is great for us to do whatever we can to be agents of the love of God in this most urgent time. My love and blessings to you all! Godspeed!

-Pastor Dave