

Love... as God Intended

6th Sunday of Easter — Year B

Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

1 John 4:7-10
John 15:9-17

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." -- John 14:15

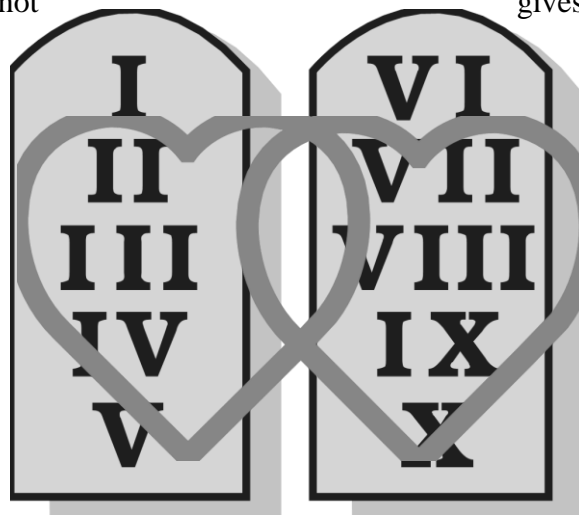
Since the late 1960s, the subject of Love, a very prominent theme that crosses cultural and religious boundaries throughout human history, underwent yet another shift in understanding as the baby-boomer came of age. Nowadays, the subject of love is usually associated with an intense emotional state of happiness connected with a person, ("I love him/her") or thing ("I just love that doggy in the window"). In other contexts, the subject of love cannot be discussed separate from a kind of banal eroticism in which the portrayal of love, particularly on television and the movies, cannot be clearly conveyed to a seemingly intelligent audience, without the person or persons involved in that love, expressing it in some sexual manner.

For others, however, love is often evoked as a great legitimizer of any number of outlooks and behaviors, which, prior to the moral upheaval of the 60s, would be seen as scandalous, or, at the very least, questionable; so that if something is done out of love, in the name of love, or because

of love, it is somehow to be considered socially and morally acceptable. Where St. Paul wrote: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:7), the modern understanding of "love" is that it allows all things, tolerates all things, accepts all things, permits all things. In short, "all you need is love."

In John's Gospel, however, Jesus gives a revolutionary approach to the social and moral attitudes of the modern world; an idea of Love as God intended. Jesus gives us His great commandment: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love" (John 15:9), and "Love one another as I love you" (John 15:12). He even goes on to state "there is no greater love than this, to

lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). In all three of these instances, however, Jesus classifies the love of which he speaks with a detail that might be considered a bit unnerving to our cultural sensitivities -- "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15),



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"You will remain in my love, if you keep my commandments," (John 15:10), and finally, "You are my friends if you do what I command you," (John 15:14).

Clearly Jesus is directing us to the kind of Love we, as Christians, are to practice. Before all other considerations, beyond any eroticism or base emotionalism, before any justification or legitimization of socio-cultural attitudes and considerations toward various actions and lifestyles, Love, first and foremost, consists of obedience to God's commands. Without that, call it what we may, it is not Love.

When all is said and done, (1 John 4:9-10). Jesus, in turn, further expanded the standard of Love by living and acting, first and foremost, in total obedience to the Father. Finally, Jesus imposed this standard

onto His followers when He commands us to "live on in [His] love."

In short, we are to Love, not by the modern ideology of popular culture, articulated in droning clichés. Rather, Jesus declares, we are to "love one another *as I have loved you*" (John 15:12); a Love lived in total obedience to the commands of God, who is the very embodiment of true and authentic Love. In the end,

this is the final test of the authenticity of any love we might claim to embody in our feelings, our values, our attitudes, our actions or our lifestyles -- "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

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it is God who has
set the standard for
Love by sacrificing
His only Son