**First United Methodist Church**

**618 Eighth Street**

**Columbus, Indiana 47201**

**Rev. Harriet Wilkin**

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“A Servant’s Heart Speaks Love”

Text: John 15:9-17

Slide #25

Love.

A word that is said with easy.

A word that can be taken for granted at times.

We say we love a certain food – like pizza or chocolate – love a certain football team – love a beautiful sunrise or sunset – that a certain flower is our favorite – that we love to give things to people. Even give stuffed animals that convey a message of love to someone.

One of the flowers that people like to give to someone whom they love and care about – to let them know that they are special are Roses.

The color of rose has meaning –

Red – love

White – purity – friendship

Yellow – joy – friendship

Peach – gratitude

Medium Pink – loveliness

Deep Pink – thankfulness

Burgundy – beauty within

Then there is meaning of the flowers if there are combinations – from unity, love to passion and congratulations.

We at times take time to make sure that we are picking the right flower – to have the right meaning when we give it to someone – maybe not always – but just think about how much time you take while looking at a flower(s) before you give it to someone.

We want to send the right impression to someone.

We want them to know what they mean to us and that we care about them – that we love them, that we value their friendship.

**1 John 4: 7-16 [[1]](#footnote-1)**

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

This passage reminds us of a deeper love – about a deeper relationship – a deeper friendship – it speaks to a covenant of love and friendship that Christ tried to explain to his disciples.

**Slide #26**

As I thought about the passage from 1 John, the words servant, love, and friendship came to mind – then a story, a folk tale, came to my mind - that has been turned into several movies over the years told the story of Cinderella.

The animals all loved Cinderella – it was her stepmother and step-sisters – who, because of their jealousy towards her, made Cinderella do all the work – the cleaning – the sewing, and even the cooking. They kept her busy. Yet through it all, they did not break her spirit. She looked for moments of hope. She was not loved by the women she lived with. They treated poorly. There was no sweet treats on Valentine's Day, no thank you, no help, no flowers of love - nothing. They treated her differently and they were unwilling to accept her into their lives. They wanted her to be their servant.

But Cinderella went about all her work with a song in her heart.

She was just too sweet – too kind – too loving.

They did not even try to love her for who she was.

The way she was dressed didn’t depict who she was on the inside.

They didn’t even try to be her friend.

To love, what does that mean?

We might have those words defined – love and friendship for ourselves.

Yet if we look at the scripture passage for today – we are given a much different perspective of those words.

Another text:

John 15: 13 reads –

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Christ defines love and friendship in a much deeper way than what we might or what even greeting cards say or even how some movies define love.

Love itself is a difficult action to truly carry out, especially the way John and the writer of 1 John state.

In John 15 – verse 14 reads – words spoken by Christ:

“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Cinderella’s stepmother and stepsisters wanted to keep Cinderella away from the public – their jealousy and disrespect for her allowed them to only see her as their servant. For they didn’t want her to know or be a part of any lifestyle they wanted. They didn’t love her or care about having any type of deep relationship – friendship with her – like Christ wants with us.

Cinderella turns that all around. Even though in the eyes of her stepmother and step-siters she was unworthy – she taught them about love and friendship.

**Slide #27**

The invitation arrived for the ball and Cinderella was excited to attend. She prepared – even making her own dress, but her family would not allow her to attend. For they had other plans.

With all their efforts to keep her away from the ball – Cinderella arrives with the help of her animal friends and her fairy godmother.

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She had so much fun at the ball – time just flu by – time was running out – she had to make a quick departure.

Cinderella the servant – the one who did everything she was asked -had a wonderful evening dancing and laughing.

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The godmother transformed her clothing to bring out her inner beauty of love and friendship for all in the ball to see.

A covenant of love – what does that look like?

**Slide #30**

Today’s scripture passages bring love to center stage.

Christ reminds those who questioned him about love – he responded with…

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Love – that is on display in the scripture passages for today and on display even for us to realize that the love that God showed Christ, Christ has for us. We are to have a deep commitment to love and not just be servants, but true friends with Christ. For our hearts – for when we accept Christ and the love he has for us – our hearts are transformed.

Christ has given the command – “Love One Another.”

The greater – deeper love that Christ offers was made known through the cross and resurrection. That powerful action of love is something so special. It is through the unity in that abiding love – deep relationship of friendship with Christ and God that we are to strive for and tell others about.

Christ searches for us. He has placed the perfect shoes on our feet – with a deep love of friendship.

Who are we leaving out?

Who have we treated like Cinderella was by her step - mother and step-sisters? Who do we continue to marginalize as we plan for events and gatherings? Who do we continue to place in a box to fit a specific mold of what has always been?

Who is Christ asking us to go and search for to place the shoe of love and friendship on? For Christ’s transformative love is open and equal for all.

***Slide # 31: Flowers of Love***

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, 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.

***A flower garden***

Go and share God with others.

Go and share your faith, hope, and love just as the women in your life taught you.

God is present even in the silence.

**Communion Hymn: In the Garden”**

**Communion Litany**

1. https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+4%3A+7-16&version=NIV (accessed 2/12/2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)