

“LOVE ANYWAY”
“When Confronting Brokenness”

February is the month for “love” not only in the Hallmark retail world, but also within the UMC Resist Harm Movement. After the focus on Sacred Resistance, the focus on love might seem a bit sentimental or light weight. It is neither. Love truly is the most powerful force in heaven and on earth. We underestimate what can happen when we love God and love each other. Love changes lives, changes hearts, transforms individuals and communities. To live out the greatest commandment to Love is one of the hardest things we ever attempt in our lives. Last week we celebrated Valentine’s Day which can be a fairly shallow expression of love. This week’s scripture from the Sermon on the Mount challenges us in ways that are much more difficult. Paul notes we start as infants in faith but can grow up in Christ to live as God’s people the world. In our divisive world, we are called to be the hands and feet and heart of Christ. This week, may we take seriously Jesus challenge to live a holy life and to love people.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“When Confronting Brokenness ”**

Prayer of the Week *Lord, we come to ask your healing, teach us of love; all unspoken shame revealing, teach us of love. Take our selfish thoughts and actions, petty feuds, divisive factions, hear us now, to you appealing, teach us love. Amen (Kevin Mayhew)*

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, February 17, 2020 1 Corinthians 3: 1-5

Paul uses the image of an infant as a symbol of our spiritual life. Physically we start out on milk and soft food, but we grow into regular food. Our spiritual life is not so different. No one begins fully understanding what it means to walk in faith as a follower of Jesus. It is easy for us to become attached to a particular Christian leader: and Paul notes that is not helpful. We are not worshiping preachers or teachers; we are called by God and the leaders are pointing to Christ. Jealousy and fighting are not acts of love and faith. We all struggle to live into the believers we are called to be. Paul invites us to pay attention to the lines we are drawing in the sand and how we are putting human leaders above Christ. To love anyway is to understand that we do not necessarily agree on everything. We have different understandings, but we are all God’s children and the call is to be part of reaching out regardless of who gets the glory. *Today, call or text or write someone who has helped you believe by their actions or lives. Thank them for their faithful witness.*

Tuesday, February 18, 2020 1 Corinthians 3: 6-10

Paul notes we are co-workers. One is not more important than the other: One plants, one waters, and one harvest, but God is the one who is over all. We are both the “workers” the “fields” and the “building.” We are both working toward bringing God’s love and grace to all AND we are still being worked “on” through that same love and grace. In verse 11 which we did read, Paul reminds the church at Corinth that “Christ is the foundation.” We are built into Christ: who is life, love and being. It can be hard to see how God is using people very different from us: with different understandings of ministry and faith. God can, does and will use a variety of gifts and people to bring the kingdom. The work of ministry and the church is God’s doing, not ours. We are called to trust and be faithful, to love when it is hard and when it is easy. Think of one or two “workers” that are often overlooked in the community of faith. *Find a way today, to say thank you for all that they do in God’s mission field.*

Wednesday, February 19, 2020 Matthew 5: 21-26

While we do not read all the rest of the fifth chapter, here is where it gets tricky. Jesus goes “there” in terms of the ten commandments particularly murder, adultery, divorce and one’s pledge or word. It is interesting we will not read the section of about the law of love: to love our enemies etc. These verses equate murder not only with physical harm, but mental, emotional and spiritual harm. This is significant when we think how often we bully people with our words. Social media is full of “memes” showing pictures of people we disagree with in a bad light. I am sure Jesus would include those actions with name calling and bullying. Jesus says we will be judged for them. This is hard. To love when we are angry with someone, when we vehemently disagree with someone seems almost impossible. To love anyway invites us to be more like Jesus: to forgive, to let go of our resentment and bitterness and to be reconciled if it is at all possible. *Who do you need to forgive? Is there someone you need to make amends? Find a way to be reconciled. Today, you are invited to NOT post that meme, to choose to rise above the anger.*

Thursday, February 20, 2020 Matthew 5: 27-32

Many of us remember when President Jimmy Carter in an interview noted he had “looked with lust” at another woman. He basically acknowledged how hard these verses are to live as Christians. Not only was Jesus concerned with how we “view” each other, he very concerned at how women were treated through divorce. They had no rights and were dependent on family if their choice was to set them aside. I do not know anyone who has physically hurt themselves as it states to do in these verses, but I think Jesus was most concerned with how we look at one another and treat one another. Viewing someone else as an “object” moves a human into something to be used, not someone to be loved. In Jesus’ day, women were divorced for no good reason and were left unprotected and uncared for. To love anyway, witnesses that no one is considered less than human. All are children of God. *Today, find a way to support ministries for those who have been abused: donate needed items for the children’s home or a ministry that works with women who have been trafficked. Find one thing to do to help the ministry of those who have been objectified.*

Friday, February 21, 2020 Matthew 5: 33-37

Just say yes or no. Jesus notes how easy it is to “swear by something” rather than just do or not do. Words matter, as we have seen in these verses from Matthew and from 1 Corinthians. Actions also matter and often speak louder than words. If you are called to be part of a ministry or to help, do it, Jesus says. If you are not, don’t do it, or in my words, do not make excuses. All of us are called to be part of the field, the ministry, the building that is the kingdom of God. We are not responsible for all of it, just our part. *Today, pray where God is calling you to serve and share and witness to Christ’s love grace in the world. Then, just do it.*