

Guided to the Cross Bible Study  
Lent, 2024  
Session 3 – Guided to Love

*I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,  
and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me  
with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

1 Timothy 1:13-14

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE)

**INTRODUCTION:** The word *love* is most often associated with romantic feelings, but what has to be remembered in the season of Lent when we focus on Jesus is that we are talking about what is called *agape* love—sacrificial love that gives completely for another, a love that never lets go or changes. We as human beings are sometimes hard-pressed to understand the depth of this kind of love, and that is why the story of Jesus’ death for us on the cross (and his resurrection) is so compelling to us and so impactful. Love in secular society can change or waver or grow distant. But that is not something that can happen with Jesus’ love. So we cling to that love as Christians, we mirror it in our relationships with our spouses and family members, who are near and dear to us, and we make his love known to the people we interact with around us. It is the prayer of the Church that Lent be a time of drawing closer to Christ and drawing closer to one another in the love that lasts forever.

**OPENING PRAYER**

**O Jesus, it might be said that Good Friday is the Church’s Valentine’s Day, because on that day we see the love of God displayed on the cross. Thank you for the love you showed us throughout your life on earth and the love you continue to reveal to us even today. Let us look to the cross when we are feeling less than loved and there remember that you will always have love and compassion toward us, and will to the very end. Amen.**

**REFLECTION – Whom do you love most in the world?**

## BEHOLD

Read **John 19:26-27**.

- What new type of relationship does Jesus set in motion between John and Mary?
- Why is it more meaningful that these words to John and Mary and spoken from the cross?
- What does the use of the word *behold* in Jesus' message seem to suggest?
- How is John referred to in this reading and elsewhere in his Gospel (John 13:23 [the one Jesus loved], John 20:2 [the one Jesus loved], John 21:20 [the disciple Jesus loved])? Why is this important?
- In Luke 11:27 (*While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!"*) Why might this be important?
- How does Jesus describe who his family is in Matthew 123:46-50?  
*<sup>46</sup> While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. <sup>47</sup> Someone told him, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." <sup>48</sup> But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" <sup>49</sup> And pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup> For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

Why is this good news for us?

## IN HIS LOVE AND MERCY

Read **Isaiah 63:7-9**.

- What actions are associated with a God filled with love and mercy? How does Jesus fulfill this prophecy from Isaiah?
- How are the people of God described in these verses in relationship to God? Why are these descriptions good for us to know and remember?
- What should we do in response to the love and kindness of God?

## GOD IS LOVE

Read **1 John 4:7-21**.

- Where does love begin? What is our role in the spreading of God's love?
- How does God's love affect our relationship with God? How does God's love affect our relationships with others?

- What qualities are connected to love? What qualities are not related to love?
- How do we know about the love of God?
- How is Jesus the embodiment of God's love?
- What should be the motivation of our love for others?
- What happens when we live in love?

## OVERFLOWING WITH LOVE

Read 1 **Timothy 1:12-17**.

- How does St. Paul describe himself before receiving God's love? How does he describe himself after receiving God's love? What do we learn about ourselves from these descriptions?
- What do we gain from Christ's love?
- How is the love of God given to us?
- Since God is eternal, immortal, invisible, what does that say to us about his love?

## RESPONSIVE READING – PSALM 25:1-7

<sup>1</sup> LORD, I appeal to you.

<sup>2</sup> **My God, I trust in you.**

Do not let me be disgraced;

**do not let my enemies gloat over me.**

<sup>3</sup> No one who waits for you  
will be disgraced;

**those who act treacherously without cause  
will be disgraced.**

<sup>4</sup> Make your ways known to me, LORD;

**teach me your paths.**

<sup>5</sup> Guide me in your truth and teach me,

**for you are the God of my salvation;**

**I wait for you all day long.**

<sup>6</sup> Remember, LORD, your compassion  
and your faithful love,

**for they have existed from antiquity.**

<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth  
or my acts of rebellion;

**in keeping with your faithful love, remember me  
because of your goodness, LORD.**

Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

**CLOSING HYMN**

**Red #384**

**“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”**

**Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down;  
fix in us thy humble dwelling; all thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art;  
visit us with thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.**

**Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast!  
Let us all in thee inherit; let us find that second rest.  
Take away our bent to sinning; Alpha and Omega be;  
end of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty.**

**Come, Almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return and never, nevermore thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.**

**Finish, then, thy new creation; pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee;  
changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.**

**CLOSING PRAYER**

**Jesus, how grateful we are for your love so deep that you went to the cross to die for us. Help us to grow in our love for you, and increase in our love for one another for the love we show to others is an extension of the love that you have shown to us. Let this Lent be a season when we show your love in selfless and sacrificial ways. Amen.**

**VERSE FOR THE WEEK**

**1 John 4:19**

**We love each other because he loved us first.**

**New Living Translation (NLT)**