

God is Still Speaking Through Love

Psalm 8, John 17:20-26

Center Church, Hartford

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“When I look at creation, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have sung into being, what are we human beings that you even notice us? What are we that you care so much about us?” (Psalm 8, imitated)

Jesus answers: “I made myself known to them so that the love with which you, God, have loved me may be fully in them, in fact, so that all the love that I am will be in them.” John 17:26

Some years ago, I was on a flight to Kansas City on the old Braniff Airlines. The crew chief of the flight attendants came on to give us the usual safety talk. As she got to the part about “in the unlikely event of a loss of air pressure, air bags will drop down from the ceiling,” she added this: “Put on your own air mask first, and if you are traveling with a child, then put on theirs. But **only if** they’re on good behavior!” We all stopped a moment and then the place erupted in laughter.

Only if. She was joking, of course, but our treatment of people as human beings, cared for so deeply by God, is full of “only ifs.”

We’ll love you only if: (congregation supplied responses like only if you are like me, only if you are a citizen, only if you are a Republican (or Democrat.) And sometimes God loves you only if: your gender identity matches the one on your birth certificate, you are against abortion, you believe exactly what I believe, you are a Christian (or Muslim, etc.).

Today I say to you that there are no “only ifs” at this Communion table. This is the table of “I made myself known to them so that the love with which you, God, have loved me may be fully in them, in fact, so that all the love that I am will be in them.” So that all the love that I am will be with them.

A mentor of mine once said: “Your sins are forgiven! God’s love is there for you! Now get with the program.” The program is that today we take the table into the world. We seek to live our love as if all the love of Jesus is in us. No conditions. Not “I will love you only if...” As Lin-Manuel Miranda once said, “Love is love is love is love is love.”

If only we could love like that. We come to the table today so we can. Let us go forth and be what we have eaten. Amen.