

Are We Loving Radically Enough?

Scripture: Matthew 10:24 – 39

10/17/21

There are some images so powerful that they can never be forgotten. That was my experience when I viewed a famous photograph of the late Princess Diana of Wales. At first glance, the photo captures a scene that seems mundane. Princess Diana is smiling warmly and she is shaking the hand of an unidentified man. But the photograph is not mundane! The story behind the photograph is remarkable!

On April 19th, 1987, Princess Diana visited the Middlesex Hospital in the UK. This hospital was engulfed in a wave of panic as it confronted the AIDS epidemic. At this time, we did not know how the AIDS virus spread but we did know the AIDS virus killed people with terrifying speed! The public treated AIDS victims like social pariahs.

So it was a stunning moment when Princess Diana, with ungloved hands and a beautiful and genuine smile calmly shook the hand of an AIDS patient that day. That image of respect and kindness would move the world to treat victims of AIDS with a similar mercy and compassion.

This is a fearless love and a radical love!

To love freely will empower each of us to radically love others. To love unafraid will empower each of us to love radically. This self-giving love is what our faith is all about!

Today's question is 'Are We Loving Radically Enough?' Are we?

It is hard to think that the way of love that Jesus taught us would be a source of conflict. Yet again and again Jesus reminds us that indeed the way of love that Christ taught us, is hard, very hard! In fact Jesus' own life was brought to end because of the way Jesus' loved. His healings, his reconciling ways, and hanging out with outcast and sinners brought him to the cross and death. Jesus' love is hard – very hard to do!

Most of us sitting here on this Sunday are safe and sound in here. We hear the stories of Jesus - his teachings, and his actions – and we smile and feel good about ourselves. We pat ourselves on the back and say to ourselves that we are following a wonderful guy in Jesus. We go about our lives claiming to be Christians with a smile on our face. We live in a society where most people say they are Christians so we feel at home in our surroundings.

The question for us is – Are we loving radically enough?

There will be many, many people walking around looking for something good. They want a smile on their face. But if you watch the evening news, usually a smile does not come to your face. If you listen to some of our political leaders, a smile does not come on your face.

When you interact with others, do you bring a smile to their face? Do you make them feel your love for Jesus? Do you love radically enough?

When we interact with others, do we bring a smile to their face? Do we make them feel our love for Jesus? Do we love radically enough?

I know there are times when you are tired, but please summon up a smile so that you may show a love for Jesus. Let people feel your love for Jesus Christ.

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Loving the unlovable in our society can indeed be radical and controversial. Being agents of healing and reconciliation can seem impossible, but the light of Christ must shine through you so that you can honestly say that you are servants of our Lord. Being an agent for Christ will stir the pot and thus be rather dangerous!

At a church that I was serving as the pastor, an elder ask me why it seemed to him that I was associating with certain people and not others. I answered him with this sharing – It is human nature for people to associate with other people who make them feel happy and give them a positive feeling. So I was associating with people who made me happy and gave me a positive feeling. I was shying away from those who had a negative attitude and made me sad.

I continued to share that I was going to work on this tendency and I ask him to pray for me so that I would give all people equal time.

I have to be honest – I like people who make me feel good, not people who bring me down. But Christ ministered to all people, and so should I. And so should we!

Are we loving radically enough?

May you greet each person you meet with a smile. I know it might be hard when you are tired. May we greet each person we meet with a smile. I know it might be hard when we are tired.

What if for the remainder of this year, we measure our effectiveness in kingdom work by how much harassment we suffered, how much trouble we got into, and how much life we lost? That might be tough to measure us that way, but that is the way of loving like Jesus!

Today I extend an invitation to each of you to take seriously the call of Jesus to love God and our neighbors with abandon! Let us recognize that our call to discipleship is not a call to love the majority, but to love the minority as well. We are not to be called to be in power or control, but we are called to love so radically enough that it hurts. We are not called to be privileged and arrogant, but we are called to denial so that we might come alongside the least to become resurrected.

The remainder of 2021 is for loving radically enough that all will come to know our love and devotion to our Lord and Savior.

Let us love all of God's people radically!

Let us pray:

God of love, you are love and to live in love is to live in you. We long for lives with that kind of fearless and joyous love. Fill us with your Holy Spirit and carry us ever deeper into your love. Let our fear subside and dissolve and let your love flow freely through us and from us.

May we, O God, take our calling to love radically with us and may we show this radical love through our service to you and our community. May we greet everyone with a smile and may we greet each other with a smile as a servant of Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

Now let us conclude this message with a song that will lead us into our communion time. This song is 'The Wonder of You' and it will be sung by Michael Incitti who is accompanied by Aimee Gusky.