

Valley Views



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Pastor Mike Hill

The Kind of Love That Marks a Christian

by: Jen Wilkin

Who God Loves above All Others

Why does the Great Commandment instruct us to love God first, others second? Because this is the order in which God himself loves. God's love did not begin in Genesis 1:1. It is eternal, existing before creation, having found eternal expression within the Trinity. It required no object outside the Godhead. We love because he first loved us. He loves us, having first and eternally loved himself.

Self-love is not always commendable in humans. While loving ourselves accurately is good, and even necessary for loving our neighbor, the Bible also speaks to the negative category of those who are "lovers of self" (2 Tim. 3:2). We have all known people whom we would label as an egotists, those who think of themselves more highly than they should. Egotism is an impossibility for God. He is irreproachably a lover of self, being the only one worthy of total love. For God not to love himself would be irrational. God's worth is infinite, making him alone worthy to receive infinite self-love, as well as the unqualified adoration and veneration of everything in creation. It is impossible for anyone, including God, to love God too much.

But it is possible for us to love the love of God too much. We do this when we emphasize the love of God at the expense of his other attributes. Sin can cause us to love a version of God that is not accurate. This is the basic definition of idolatry, a disordered love. Ironically, one of the most common forms our idolatry takes is the disordered love of the love of God. The overemphasis of God's love is even evident in non-Christians. They may know very little of the Bible, yet many know and

are quick to quote the truism that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). The statement “My God is a God of love” often has as its subtext the idea that his love precludes him ever acting in wrath or justice, or in any way that does not fit our human conceptions of love.

But God’s love is both holy and infinite, which means that all his actions are loving, even when we cannot perceive them to be so. Not only are all his actions loving, but all he withholds or refrains from doing is also loving. When God acts in Scripture in ways we perceive to be unloving, the problem is not with his actions but with our limited perspective. When we endure hardship or loss, we may be tempted to question whether God loves us. This is why the Bible takes such care to remind us that hardship and loss are to be expected in this life. Hardship and loss are agents of separation, but nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. It is high and long, wide and deep, and if we fix our eyes on it, perhaps we may be able to begin to grasp some of that even in this lifetime.

And as we grasp it, we can then press it upon our neighbor.

Love without Bounds

Once we recognize that the love God has bestowed upon us is not merely an emotion but an act of the will, we are forced to reevaluate how we love others. Specifically, we must reevaluate our categories. No longer can we parse our fellow humans into the categories of “lovable” and “unlovable.”

If love is an act of the will—not motivated by need, not measuring worth, not requiring reciprocity—then there is no such category as “unlovable.” This is what Jesus teaches in the parable of the good Samaritan. When the lawyer seeks to qualify the meaning of the Great Commandment by asking, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29), Jesus responds with a story about a man who shows love to the “unlovable.” It is, of course, a story about himself—and a story about everyone of us who has received rescue at his hands. As the parable is careful to illustrate, it is a costly and unsought rescue, an unsought rescue, bestowed upon an undeserving recipient.

Love, No Matter the Cost

The costliness of *agape* is evident in the cross. Thus, those who resolve to take up their cross resolve to love as Christ loved, in a costly manner.

When we begin to follow Christ, we resolve to love God *even if it costs us*. And it does cost us—it costs us our pride, our comfort, our self-will, our self-sufficiency. At times, it costs us amicable relationships with family, our expectation of safety, and more. But in laying these aside, we learn the worthiness of the object of our love in a deeper way. We find increasing freedom, and as we mature, we resolve to love God *no matter what it costs us*.

When we begin to follow Christ, we resolve to love our neighbor *even if it costs us*. And it does cost us—it costs us our preferences, our time, our financial resources, our entitlement, our stereotypes. At times, it costs us our popularity, respect, and more. But in laying these aside, we learn the brokenness of the object of our love in a deeper way. We find increasing empathy, and as we mature, we resolve to love our neighbor *no matter what it costs us*.

This is the kind of love that marks believers as distinct from the world. What is the will of God for your life? That you love as you have been loved. When faced with a decision, ask yourself: Which choice enables me to grow in *agape* for God and others? And then choose according to his will.





December 23, 2020

Elimsport
16145 S Hwy 44
Allenwood, PA 17810

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you"

Matthew (28:19-20)

Dear Friends in Mission,

Thank you!

Your financial support is enabling Global Ministries missionaries to fulfill the mission of the Church.

Through your financial support you are serving within a vital network of interactive relationships in more than 60 countries around the world.

Nearly 400 United Methodist missionaries come from many places and backgrounds, witnessing and serving in dramatically different locales and cultures, engaging in a range of activities and professions as pastors, educators, congregational and leadership developers, regional coordinators for UMCOR, agriculturalists, health coordinators, and doctors.

On behalf of the people who are recipients of the love of God through the direct ministry of a Global Missions missionary – *Thank You!*

Grace and Peace,

Roland Fernandes, General Secretary

Supporting
James Keech
Date Received 12-08-20

Gift Amount
\$ 83.33

Account #17960

Please retain this letter as your receipt. In compliance with IRS regulations, no goods or services were provided by the General Board of Global Ministries in consideration of your contribution.

American Rescue Workers *Williamsport*



Community Outreach Ministries

The Men's Center Program
Men's Transitional Shelter
ARW Community Church
Retail Thrift Stores
Toys for Tots Distributor
4th Largest County Recycler
United Way partner programs:
Saving Grace Shelter
Social Service Center

Pastor Sam Astin, *Executive Director*
Dawn Astin, *Business Administrator*

November 19, 2020

Elmsport United Methodist Church
5 Gap Road
Allenwood, PA 17810

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your gift in the amount of \$200.00 to benefit the ministry of American Rescue Workers during a time when our community needs us the most.

It is because of your generosity that American Rescue Workers is able to stand in the gap for thousands of families in crisis each year. Whether that crisis is homelessness, food insecurity, or an unforeseen emergency, it is thanks to you that we can continue to provide warmth, comfort, and hope to those who we care for.

With Sincere Appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Valerie Fessler'.

Valerie Fessler
Director of Development and Community Engagement
valerie@arwilliamsport.org



St. John's United Methodist Church

Thank you so very much for your donation to the Montgomery food bank.

Your gift was very much appreciated. Thank you for caring for the needy

People of the Montgomery Area.

Thanks again

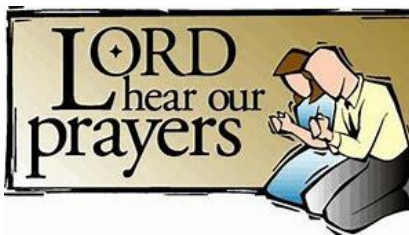
Footprints of Montgomery

*Thank you so very much for all the gifts you gave
to the Montgomery Food Bank for the year of 2020.*



Please pray for our community and our churches as we continue to find our way into 2021 and deal with the issues of our times.

We are looking for someone to be our Annual Conference delegate for 2021. This involves going to Hershey for up to three days on June 3-5 and attending the daily worship, meetings, and voting on various issues. We stay at the Hershey convention center. Expenses are paid by our parish. This is a very interesting experience and not like the conferences in the old days. Please contact Pastor Mike if interested.



Various means to keep updated:

website: evpumc.org

Face book: Elimsport United Methodist Parish

Electronic sign at Elimsport church

email Pastor Mike: hjebm@comcast.net

email church: elimsportumc@gmail.com

Call Pastor Mike: 570-547-1386

Text Pastor Mike: 570-974-8590 (please identify yourself when texting)

Be pro-active in getting the word out to others in the church.

We are looking for someone to be a Vacation Bible School coordinator with the coordinator from Elimsport church. Please let Pastor Mike know if you are interested.



- Items for March's newsletter are due February **20th**.
- Items for the weekly bulletin's need to be to the church office by **Wednesday morning** each week.

(Items received after these dates are not guaranteed to be printed.)

Community breakfast is on hold until further notice.



Please be sure to check the church website evpumc.org and Elimsport United Methodist Parish face book for up to date church news.



Elimsport Administrative Council will meet Monday, February 8th at 6:30.



St. John's Administrative Council will meet Thursday, February 11th at 7:00.



Kid's Corner



ELIMSPORT VALLEY UNITED METHODIST PARISH

Worship Schedule:

Elimsport UMC

Worship 9:00 am
Sunday School 10:30 am

St. John's UMC

Sunday School 9:15 am
Worship 10:30 am

Parish Youth Group

Check weekly Bulletin for current schedule and events
(at Elimsport)

Parish Bible Study

Varies according to the season.

Parish Office:

16145S. RT 44 HWY
Allenwood, PA 17810

Parsonage Phone:

(570) 547-1386

Pastor Mike's Cell:

(570) 974-8590

Parish Website:

www.evpumc.org

Parish email:

elimsportumc@gmail.com

www.evpumc.org

Mark 12:30
And thou shalt love the
Lord thy God with all thy
heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy mind, and
with all thy strength: this is
the first commandment.

Love one
another
like I have
loved you.
JOHN 13:34

Our Mission Statement at Elimsport UMC



We gather together as a community of Christian believers to worship, fellowship, and to learn more about God. By the unity of the Spirit and the support of each other, we are able to reach out to the community and the world.

Our Mission Statement at St. John's UMC



The purpose of St. John's is to both evangelize and nurture. We are called to show God's love in our world by giving aid and by spreading the Good News of Christ. We in turn provide an atmosphere for nurturing where Biblical truths are shared enabling people to become spiritually enriched. By providing this, people will learn and through learning, become more effective witnesses.