

PRELUDE

“St. Valentine’s Day Medley”

arr. V. Bryner

CALL TO WORSHIP

I Corinthians 13:9-10,13, *The Message Bible*

Brendan & Kaleigh McNerney

L: We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete.

**C: But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.**

L: But right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation:

**C: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.**

**All: Let us worship God, who is Love.**

HYMN

“O Love of God”

1. O love of God, how strong and true! Eternal and yet ever new,  
uncomprehended and unbought, beyond all knowledge and all thought!
2. O love of God, how deep and great, far deeper than our deepest hate;  
self-fed, self-kindled like the light, changeless, eternal, infinite.
3. O heavenly love, how precious still, in days of weariness and ill,  
in nights of pain and helplessness, to heal, to comfort, and to bless!
4. O wide-embracing, wondrous love! We read you in the sky above;  
we read you in the earth below, in seas that swell, and streams that flow.

We thought it would be interesting to focus on love on this Sunday that falls on St. Valentine’s feast day; known in our Hallmark culture as Valentine’s Day.

Many years ago the English writer, C.S. Lewis, wrote a book called The Four Loves. He pointed out that we find four different words for love in the Greek Christian Scriptures. Each Greek word focuses on a different aspect within the framework of our word “love”.

What we know today is that these different aspects of love are all rooted in one and the same love – God’s love. What we also know is very often we say we practice love, but it really is not love we are living out, it is most often a desire for power or a claim to care, but in reality it is a desire to control.

We will be lifting up these four Greek words in worship through the use of scripture, poems, special music, and hymns.

We begin with the word most important to the early church and us: Agape. This is the word the early church used, when referring to God’s unconditional love for us and all creation. All other loves are included in agape love. Agape love is very powerful. The scripture passage that best defines agape love is also the cornerstone passage of my faith. It is found in Paul’s letter to the church in Rome.

**Agape: Unconditional**

SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:35,37-39

Bill Sterrett

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the One who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

READING

“Love Tells a Story”

by Jamie Poulton

Love came down  
arms wide open  
and met us,  
met me,

Head On.

Me and love, we have some differences

When Love says unconditional, I don't always believe it.

Love sounds a lot like the popular kid in school inviting you to sit at her lunch table.

There has to be a catch.

When Love says unconditional, I say "Are you sure about that?"

Because Love looks like a child, bouncing and laughing

full speed down the playground slide, no fear

They don't know what the world is like

Yet.

Love looks up smiling, "Come on, stay with me!!" unconditional.

I don't think Love knows quite what they're getting into

"Have you met me?"

I lie

I leave

I push people away

I hurt others.

There are days when I am a mess of anxiety and fear and anger and frustration and not a whole lot else.

There are days when I don't get out of bed.

I continually avoid confronting my demons

I have demons

I have made some *really* stupid mistakes

I am a failure.

I lose

I doubt

I hate others and sometimes myself.

I'm queer and trans for goodness sakes, you *have* to have something against that

Love gives me a look.

She is in full drag, face done, wig on, all-over sequin dress, glaring down at me over the glasses halfway down her nose, one perfectly drawn eyebrow slightly raised, "*Honey.*"

We have this conversation almost every day, and I really should have seen this coming.

Love tells me a story.

Of when

they judged and misunderstood Love

and Love stayed.

They ignored Love

and Love stayed.

They did not believe Love would stay.

and Love stayed.

They threatened Love,

and he stayed.

They betrayed Love,

denied, mocked, interrogated, whipped, and tied Him to a cross.

Love died.

And they were so sure that Love was never coming back.

Some days I believe that Love is never coming back.

that Love doesn't want me.

that I, that the world, is capable of pushing Love away for good.

There are days when we think that Death, that Fear, Depression, Anxiety, Shame, Doubt and Hatred have won.

And Love stays.

HYMN

“I Will Lift the Cloud of Night” (NCH #482, vs. 1,2,4)

1. I will lift the cloud of night before you,  
what is wrong I'll make it right before you,  
all your battles I will fight before you, and the high place I'll bring down.

*Refrain:* When you walk and lose the way I'll lead you;  
on the produce of the land I'll feed you;  
And a home within my heart I'll deed you; and the high place I'll bring down.

2. With an everlasting love I'll love you,  
though with trials I will test and prove you,  
still there's nothing that can hurt or move you; and the high place I'll bring down.

*Refrain*

3. I will lift the cloud of night before you,  
I will make the crooked straight before you  
I will spread my wings protecting o'er you; and the high place I'll bring down.

*Refrain*

### **Storge: Family, Pets**

Encompassed in agape love is storge. This is the love we have for family members; the love of a parent for a child; the love of a pet. There is a certain innocence and wonder in this love. There is also a patience and kindness in it.

SCRIPTURE

I John 4:7-12; 3:18

Kristen Zeiser

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God's only Son was sent into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent the Son to be a sacrifice for us. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us.

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Kindergarten Love Song :)”

D. Gasparini

Molly Donovan, *vocals* & Lila Kane, *keyboard*

I see that you have a Mario Lunchbox

Look, I have one too

But mine has a strap and a matching Thermos

Is that something that impresses you?

I see that your mum pack you Nila Wafers

Well, that's my favourite food

I'll trade you some wafes for my jello pudding

Is that something that you'd like to do?

Do you wanna hold hands, I mean for Red Rover

I think there's a game on the grass

Or maybe we could, “Oh you're talking to Kylie,

Never mind see you in class”

I noticed you noticed my crayon collection

And I noticed you were missing your blue

You can borrow mine if you wanna

Is that something that you'd like to do?

Do you wanna play games? I like playing Ninjas

Or we could pretend to fly  
The reason I ask is cause I think I like y...  
“Never mine You’re mums here bye!”

What’s your favourite letter of the alphabet so far?  
Mine is “M” Mmm mmm mmm  
Do you like dogs mines out in my mums car  
She’s a lab and her name is Genevieve

I have a question!  
My favourite colours Magenta!  
Guess What! I’m turing 6 of Friday!  
My mums bringing cupcakes to class!  
My Dad can’t come cause he has to work.  
He says “Oblama” takes half of what he makes ...  
I don’t know what that means!

Do you like my hair cut?  
Thanks! Do you have a scooter?  
I have a scooter. We could ride sometime if you want ...  
I like the handshake we made up together  
It’s hard, but it’s something we do

Do you think it’s weird that you’re friends with a girl?  
Cause I don’t, I hope you don’t too.  
Do you wanna come by for some juice after school?  
It’s the juice with the cat on the can  
If you don’t that’s ok  
“I just, Wait! You ???”  
“Ok great! It’s plan!

#### SCRIPTURE

Job 12:7-10

Maryellen Castro

7 “But ask the animals, and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;  
8 ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.  
9 Who among all these does not know  
that the hand of the Lord has done this?  
10 In God’s hand is the life of every living thing  
and the breath of every human being.

#### II Samuel 12:2a-3

There were two men in a certain city, one very rich, owning many flocks of sheep and herds of goats; and the other very poor, owning nothing but a little lamb he had managed to buy. It was his children’s pet, and he fed it from his own plate and let it drink from his own cup; he cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter.

#### SPECIAL MUSIC

“Times Like This”

Flaherty & Ahrens

Reegan Camiré, *vocals* & Lila Kane, *piano*

A friendly face  
The kind of face  
That melts you with a grin  
The kind of eyes that welcome you  
The minute you walk in  
A tender glance  
You simply can't refuse

Times like this, a girl could use...a dog.

He listens when you tell him things  
There's nothing you can't say  
And unlike certain people  
You can teach him how to stay

And if the world  
is giving you the blues  
He cheers you up  
by chewing up the news

It's things like that  
That make you chose...a dog

Other people need  
Romance, dancing, playing around  
Other people need constant fun  
Well I'm not one  
I have my feet on the ground

Give me...a quiet night  
A stack of books  
A tuna melt on rye  
A simple walk together  
Underneath the starry sky

And, suddenly,  
the night is something grand  
And all because  
There's someone special there

Who's gazing at the view  
His head upon...your shoes

At times like this  
I sure could use....  
A dog

#### SCRIPTURE

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

Lexi Whitney

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

#### HYMN

“The Gift of Love” (The Chalice Hymnal, #526)

Barbara Zeiser, cantor

1. Though I may speak with bravest fire, and have the gift to all inspire,  
and have not love, my words are vain, as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.
2. Though I may give all I possess, and striving so my love profess,  
but not be given by love within, the profit soon turns strangely thin.
3. Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control, our spirits long to be made whole.  
Let inward love guide every deed; by this we worship, and are freed.

#### **Eros: Romantic**

Ah, eros. We all know this Greek word. It is the basis for our word erotic. How erotic is most commonly used in our society, it has nothing to do with love and everything to do with power and control.

For the Greeks and early Christians eros is all about romantic love; the love of attraction; and, yes, the physicality of love. It takes its best scripture form in the whole book called Song of Solomon. But eros can be found in many other biblical stories. For example, Jonathan and David.

SCRIPTURE

I Samuel 18:1-4; 20:16-17

Charles Simonson

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord seek out the enemies of David." Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own life.

READING

"Our Love"

Leslie Simonson

Our love is as good and warm as honey to the throat,  
As linen to the body,  
Fine garments on a day of celebration,  
And candlelight to the worshippers  
when they enter in.

This love is like a ripe pear in the hands of a hungry child,  
Like the spices that are mixed with fine wine.  
Our love is like the yeast  
that the baker works into the bread.

We will be together even as old age comes.  
And the days in between  
Will be the food that is set before us;  
As nourishing as pears with honey,  
fresh bread  
and aromatic wine.

HYMN

"When Love Is Found" (The Chalice Hymnal, #499)

Sarah Mello, cantor

1. When love is found and hope comes home, sing and be glad that two are one.  
When love explodes and fills the sky, praise God, and share our Maker's joy.
2. When love has flowered in trust and care,  
build both each day, that love may dare  
to reach beyond home's warmth and light, to serve and strive for truth and right.
3. When love is tried as loved-ones change,  
hold still to hope, though all seems strange,  
till ease returns and love grows wise through listening ears and opened eyes.
4. When love is torn, and trust betrayed, pray strength to love till torments fade,  
till lovers keep no score of wrong, but hear through pain love's Easter song.
5. Praise God for love, praise God for life, in age or youth, in calm or strife.  
Lift up your hearts! Let love be fed through death and life in broken bread.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

SERVICE OF GIVING

**Philia: Friendship, Neighbor**

Our final Greek word for love is philia. This is one we also know well. Philadelphia, city of brotherly love. Philia refers to the love between friends and neighbors. It is a love of affection and honoring of the other. I am certain this is the love Jesus was referring to, when he said there is no greater love than to stand strong for one's friends.

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:9-10

Mike McCoy

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor

John 15:12-13

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Put a Little Love in Your Heart"

Vaughn Bryner, *vocals & keyboard*

*Refrain:* And the world will be a better place

And the world will be a better place

For you and me

You just wait and see

THE TAKE HOME

"When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace!"

- *Jimi Hendrix*

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"Postlude on THE GIFT OF LOVE"

arr. V. Bryner

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