

Monday 3 July 2017

LOVE CELEBRATES (*Nick Bekker*)

When somebody's having a tough time, it's easy to be sympathetic. It's easy to encourage people when they're down. But sometimes what we can't stand is when they get a promotion. We're not very good at handling the success of other people. Rather than rejoicing in it, we resent it. In fact, we sometimes wish bad things would happen to people, because somehow we think that if we can blow out somebody else's candle, ours will shine brighter.

We'd enjoy life a whole lot more if we would learn to be happy about the successes of other people. If we're only happy when things go well for us, we're going to be miserable most of our lives, because things won't always go well for us or anybody else. But if we learn to be happy at other people's successes and enjoy other people's celebrations, we can be happy pretty much all the time.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:4, "*Love does not envy.*" Envy is the most unloving thing we can do to somebody else. Love is not envious.

Love celebrates God's goodness to others.

Scripture:

Read: Romans 12:15

Read this passage a few times, read it out loud, read it quietly. Focus on the words.

Observation:

Look at the passage again. What stands out for you? Are there any words or phrases or sentences that really jump out at you? What is going on in this passage?

Application:

1. Who are the people you call when you want to celebrate something good in your life? Are you that kind of friend to other people?
2. How have you seen envy destroy a relationship?
3. In what ways does envy tend to creep into our hearts? What can you do to keep it from getting a grip on your heart?

Pray:

Lord thank you for your incredible love for me. Thank you that no matter what, you love me, and your love cannot be changed – I cannot make you love me more, or less! Please help me today to display your love to those around me. Help me especially to rejoice with those who rejoice and to celebrate your goodness to others. Please forgive me where I have been envious of the blessings you have bestowed on others and where I have been slow to mourn with them.

Tuesday 4 July 2017

LOVE CELEBRATES (*Jacqui Rivas*)

Richard Rohr helps us, with John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308) a Franciscan philosopher and theologian, to an understanding of the doctrine of being.

“This gives us a foundation for understanding the sacredness of everything and our connection with everything. *We are already connected to everything*—inherently, objectively, metaphysically, ontologically, and theologically. We don’t create the connection by going to church or reading the Bible, although we hopefully enliven the connection. In Francis’ worldview, we begin with “original blessing,” as Matthew Fox rightly said. Our DNA is already divine; that is why we naturally seek to know and love God. There has to be a little bit of something inside you for you to be attracted to it; *like knows like*. You are what you are looking for!

A heart transformed by this realization of oneness knows that only love “in here” can spot and enjoy love “over there.” Thus true spiritual teachers see fear, constriction, and resentment as blindness that must be overcome. These emotions impede growth. Thus all mystics are positive people—or they are not mystics. Their spiritual warfare is precisely the work of recognizing and then handing over all of their inner negativity and fear to God. The great paradox here is that such a victory is a gift from God, and yet somehow *you* must want it very much (Philippians 2:12b-13). God does not come unless invited.’

Scripture:

Philippians 2:12b-13

Read this passage a few times, read it out loud, read it quietly. Focus on the words.

These verses are probably a hymn sung by the early church.

Observation:

Look at the passage again. What stands out for you? Are there any words or phrases or sentences that really jump out at you? What is going on in this passage?

Application:

1. How do good works, love and our mind fit together?
2. What kind of love do you think the world is looking for in the church?
3. What kind of love are you looking for?
4. Does love come from your mind or your heart?

Pray:

Lord, instil in my heart and mind the same love that is in Christ.

Help me be a work of salvation that seeks love at the centre in words, deeds and thought.

Wednesday 5 July 2017

LOVE CELEBRATES (*Phezile Koekoe*)

God loves us deeply. When we celebrate love, this love of God needs to resonate within us. It needs to shape our thinking, actions, and words.

As we celebrate love, with a special focus on education this week, we need to be mindful of how we respond to the education crisis in SA. Whether we respond by giving resources, time, or talents, it should be driven and inspired by love, particularly by 1 Cor 13, which reminds us that “love is patient and kind. It does not envy nor boast. It is not proud. It is not rude. It does not seek its own way, is not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices in the truth. Love believes, hopes and endures. Love never fails.”

This is how God responds to us, and this is how we should respond to others - with patience, kindness, hope, humility and love. God is love, and His character never changes. So if His love resonates within us, that love will never change for those around us.

Scripture:

Read: Matthew 22:36-38

Read this passage a few times, read it out loud, read it quietly. Focus on the words.

Observation:

Look at the passage again. What stands out for you? Are there any words or phrases or sentences that really jump out at you? What is going on in this passage?

Application:

1. What hinders you from loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength?
2. What hinders you from loving your neighbour as you love yourself?
3. How do you want God to use you, to celebrate love in education?

Pray:

Lord, today please teach me to truly love you with all my heart, mind, soul and strength and teach me to love others as I love myself. I pray for the education crisis in our country, especially those who are on the periphery of society, who are studying and learning under difficult circumstances, with inadequate resources. I pray for teachers and those involved in the education system. Please help them to do their work with love, patience and kindness. I pray that all that is done at places of education may be driven by love. Lord please use us as the church to celebrate love through education. Amen.