

Sandpoint church of Christ

June 19, 2016
vol. 125

1331 Cedar Street
Sandpoint, ID 83864

Love Enough

by Darryl Cope

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. Who hasn't heard that passage or seen John 3:16 on a billboard or even under an athlete's eyes at some major sporting event; not to mention bumper stickers. It seems most everyone is familiar with the saying. What a wonderful thought, that God loves me enough to save me from my self-inflicted destruction. He did not want me to perish. We should never forget who loves us. But have you ever considered, not who did or what was done, but instead the pivotal point that triggered the action; the straw that broke the camel's back or the drop of water that sunk the ship.

When my brother and I were very young, our dad made a teeter-totter for us in the backyard. That's normally considered a two-person piece of equipment but I routinely had fun with it all by myself. It was long and built high off the ground. The axis was about 4 feet high so I used to run up until the other end started to go down and I would try to balance it. It seemed like the end that was down would never come off the ground but when it did, the difficult thing then became not going too far and tipping the scales. That's a lot harder than it might sound. Tipping the scales: that's what I'm talking about.

We throw some words around so often they lose their impact. The word "love" is one of those words. I just love that shirt, or I love my new car, I love that poem. Our use of hyperbole has become epidemic. We take a bite of lasagna and we say, "it's to die for". I was shopping with my wife and she found a blouse that she just loved and she picked it up and looked at the price and was instantly less enamored. There must be a substantive way to measure such emotions or feelings. My sweetheart's reaction to the price tag on that beautiful blouse hints at what I believe the infallible answer is to the question of measure.

Our superlatives aside, I suppose it's simply a matter of measurement or weight. Our love, our compassion, our kindness, even our faith can be measured by our actions. Is it enough to tip the scales? Will it get us off the couch? Will it break the inertia of doing nothing and stirring us to action? What does it tell you when someone says, "I love you soooo much" but it seldom shows in any meaningful way? We would then do well to question the claim of love. There's a strong possibility it is somewhat exaggerated.

For GOD so loved... Let's measure His love by the price He was willing to pay. The price tag on this love is almost incomprehensible. How do we measure love? Is it by volume or by intensity or is it by the willingness to sacrifice, to demonstrate or show it? I have heard it said that we should say, "I love you" more often but I firmly believe that we need to act on our claims because words without actions ring hollow.

The 11th chapter of Hebrews is filled with many stories of great men who trusted God and demonstrated their trust by their actions. Chapter 12 begins with a reminder that we have that great cloud of witnesses surrounding us and that we should live the same. We can do that by fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross despising the shame. When we fix our eyes on Jesus and scrutinize his actions we can see his motivation. It was for the joy set before him. Let's stop right here and try to picture a scale and things being put on either side of that scale. On one side is the joy set before him. If I understand this correctly, the joy is referring to our salvation. It is having us in His presence throughout eternity as opposed to us being lost. On the other side of the scale was the cross. Added to the cross is the shame, the disgrace, the humiliation that He suffered at the hands of his own creation. Which one would He allot the most weight or value? Which one would be the determining factor? How would you like to weigh the pros and cons on this one? Does the shame weigh more than the joy? Which one do we give the most value? In order for anything to matter in the decision making process, it must first be counted. Interestingly enough, He establishes for us the value He placed on all elements of His decision. The joy, extremely precious, the shame, not even on the scale. It did not count.

The great apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13, explaining love, informs us that love does not take into account a wrong suffered. The key word there is "count". I remember, as a kid, playing a game or doing something of a competitive nature and you messed up, you immediately yelled, "that doesn't count".

Love does not allow a wrong suffered to go on the scale. The beautiful, yet scary, aspect to all of this is knowing that we are the judge that determines the weight or value of every item on the scale.

Our Lord Jesus made it clear in Mt 6:21 that whatever we treasure (value), is where our heart is (what we love). His treasure was our redemption so His heart was in it all the way. When we fix our eyes on Jesus we can learn a lot about tipping the scales in favor of love and compassion.

GOD so loved-- how much?--He gave His son.

Word so loved-- how much?-- He voluntarily emptied Himself from the form of GOD into the form of the baby Jesus, the son of GOD.

We so love-- how much?--we keep His commandments, love those who hate and despite fully use us

When we love enough to be moved to action, good will follow. What a wonderful world it would be if all actions and reactions were motivated by love.

We so love— how much? Enough to act on it, please.