

“Seeing the World through God’s Eyes of Love”

Psalm 33: 1-5, 13-22

Here, we are, the fourth week of Advent and today, we are talking about love. You would think this would have been an easy sermon to write. We talk about love all the time as people of faith. I’m not sure we go a Sunday where love isn’t mentioned somewhere in our service. It is usually mentioned in our prayers. It is usually mentioned in the sermon. And I know love is definitely mentioned in the moments surrounding communion time in the service. As people of faith, we talk about love all the time.

So if that is the case, why on earth was this sermon, this sermon about seeing the world through God’s eyes of love, so difficult to write?

Let me tell you, as soon as I asked myself that question, I knew I had my answer. Love shouldn’t be something we just talk about in our worship service as people of faith. Instead, Love should be the force that shapes our words and actions. Love should be the force that reminds us that God is still at work in our world. Love should be the force that transforms and brings forth new life for all of God’s creation.

Love should be the defining force, the guiding force, the leading force in our world. But sad to say, more often than not, love doesn't seem to be any kind of force in our world. It gets buried in people's search for power and might. And it is certainly hard to find love mentioned in any of our headlines these days. Usually the headlines would rather tell us more about humankind's brokenness than about the transforming power of God's love.

Maybe that's why it is so hard to talk about God's love in our world today because we honestly wonder if it still even exists. It seems that everything in our world, everything about our world tells us that God's love is a thing from a distant past and we are fools for believing that it still exists, let alone believing it has the power to change the world.

Now before we all get too depressed on this joyous Sunday, I will tell you, I'm okay with being considered foolish. And thankfully, regardless of what our news headlines tell us, we all still believe love has the power to change the world. Otherwise, We wouldn't be here if we didn't. We believe God's love has the power to change the world. We are counting on it. We are depending on God's love to do just that, to transform this world into God's Kingdom here on earth. Which is why Psalm 33 is such the perfect Scripture for today.

We hear today a wonderful reminder in our Scripture this morning that God's love is here, that God's love will always be here, that God's love does have the power to change the world. And not only that, we also hear that regardless of what this world tells us, God's love is still around. It is brimming over. It is spilling over, running down, and transforming our world today and all days.

Now, I know this is not the text we were all expecting to hear this Sunday. I'm sure everyone was expecting to hear the story of Mary or at the very least, a mention of shepherds and angels in the Scripture.

No I didn't forget what Sunday this is. And yes, I know the story of the manger in Bethlehem is a good story, especially when we are talking about God's love. There is no denying it. The baby Jesus, the Word made flesh, the story of how Love Incarnate came down, is a great story, especially if we are going to be talking about God's love.

But it's not the only story that talks about God's love for the people of God. Our Scriptures are filled with page after page of stories that tell us of how much God loves God's people. The story in Bethlehem is just one example. And don't worry, we'll get to that story. It will just be later in the week.

But today, we are looking at this particular text and we get a wonderful reminder that the Earth is full of God's steadfast love. I'm going to let that sink in

for a moment. That even before baby Jesus was a twinkling in God's eye, our world was full of God's steadfast love. That even before the manger, even before the cross, our world was full of God's steadfast love. Think about the significance of that. The magnitude of that statement. Before the manger, before the cross, our world was full of God's love.

Our world was full of God's love before the angels and the shepherds appeared. Long before Mary encountered the angel, long before Joseph took everyone to Bethlehem, our world has been, is now, and forever will be full of God's steadfast love.

That's amazing stuff right there. That is life changing information right there. God's love was at work in this world long before that night in a stable all those years ago.

The reason why I want us all to remember this fact and even more importantly, the reason why this fact matters to us as people of faith is because deep down, we all need to hear that the moment, the moment when Love came down to live among the people of God, the moment that makes God's love real for us is more than just a story. We need to hear that it was more than just a moment in time. As people of faith, we need constant reminders that God's love is a way of life for us as the people of God here on earth. And Psalm 33 does just that.

Let me explain: As I said earlier, sometimes it seems like the only news we hear about these days tells us of humankind's brokenness. And this week was no different. This week, as I was beginning sermon preparation, as I was beginning to form my thoughts on what to say about God's love, all I could hear were news headlines telling me about events that had nothing to do with God's love. There were stories about a hostage taking in Sydney. There were stories about gunman entering a school in Pakistan and killing 140 children. The headlines were full of stories about humankind's inability to see the world through God's eyes of love. It was almost too much for me

With each passing story, I wondered how in the world am I supposed to talk about God's love in midst of all these headlines, these headlines that seem to tell us that God's love doesn't exist. Then I realized something. I realized that the greatest gift that we have as people of faith, and the greatest gift that we can share with all of our brothers and sisters in the midst of all these headlines is the knowledge and truth that God's moment of incarnation, that moment when God's Word of light and love became flesh, that moment when Love broke into our world and set us free, that wonderful life changing, life giving moment goes beyond the manger in Bethlehem. It goes beyond just being a story about the birth of a child. This moment, in which God's love became real for us, is just one moment in a whole long line of moments that show us, that tell us how much God loves us. This

moment, this moment that happened in the stable in Bethlehem is just one moment in a whole long line of moments that tell us time and time again that when God's Love filled the world, it was not just limited to one day. Instead, it tells us, it shows us that God's love is for today and all days.

That's what the world needs to hear right now. That's what we should be shouting from the mountain tops right now. We are called to share the good news, the news being that God loves us more than we could ever imagine and the even better news being that God is not done with us yet.

Here's why I say that: You see, the world rushes us to December 24th and then when we get there, it speeds us onto December 25th. Then on December 26th, the world starts rushing us to shove the manger back into the storage shed again. Why? You ask. For one simple reason: Because the world wants us to think that if we rush by Bethlehem, if we minimalize the significance of the moment when God became flesh and lived among us, the world thinks if it can limit God's incarnation to just one day, then it can also limit the impact of God's love on the world. The world thinks if it can get us to ignore the scene in the manger, then it can also limit the life-changing, the life transforming affect God's love has on this world. And if the world can do that, then the world wins right?

But we as people of faith know differently. We know that The manger can be put away but the stars at night would tell of God's love and glory. We know that The shepherds can be put out to pasture again but the world cannot silence the angels' chorus. As people of faith, we know that The world can turn the page on the calendar and declare that the season of giving is over but that doesn't change the fact that our world has been given and continues to be given the greatest gift each and every day. We know that we have been given the gift of God's steadfast love and we can and we do encounter it each and every day.

Yes, I know it seems like I am skipping ahead a bit but I am not really. I'm just telling the whole story. God didn't come just on one night to show us how much God loves us. That moment was just one moment in a long line of moments that show us, that tell us how much God loves us. The fact is, and the fact remains, that since the beginning of time, God has constantly shown the people of God how much God loves us, how far God will go to have us encounter God's love in our lives, how far God will go to show us the real power, the real force that can transform the world, the real power, the real force that can bring healing and wholeness to all of God's creation. God's incarnation happened that night in a stable all those years ago but that doesn't mean it was the only time God showed the world how much God loves us. God has been doing that each and every day since the beginning of time.

You see, the simple truth is that God is not done with us yet. God is not some one and done kind of God. God has been here for us. God is here for us now and God will always be there for us. Because, we matter to God. We matter to God. As the people of God, we matter to God beyond just one encounter. We matter to God beyond our first meet and greet with God. We have mattered to God even before the time we were even born. As children of God, created in God's image, as ones named and claimed as God's own, we matter to God.

And Psalm 33 is just one text in a long line of texts, is just one chapter in our whole Bible that tells us how much we matter to God. We matter to God beyond Bethlehem. We matter to God beyond the manger. We matter to God beyond the cross. We matter to God today and all days.

And because we matter to God, God watches over us. Now let me say, God is not watching over us in some creepy way nor is God watching us like some science experiment gone wrong.

God is watching over us because God loves us more than we could ever imagine. God is watching over us because we matter to God.

Psalm 33 tells us that the God who shaped us, the God who formed us, the God who knew us before we were a twinkling in our parents' eyes, watches over us and is ready to come to us any time we need.

That is pretty amazing. And it is pretty humbling as well. The sheer magnitude of such a love overwhelms us. It steals our breath away. Sometimes it renders us speechless to think about how much God loves us, to experience, to encounter the reminders of God's loving and enduring presence that surrounds us each and every day. Sometimes it is simply too much to imagine that we matter to God.

But what I love about this text is that it grounds us once more. It gives us the words to shout from the mountaintop once we find our voices once more. Because it reminds us that it is not about us. God's love has never been nor will it ever be just about us. Sure God's love is amazing but it is challenging as well.

After we hear about how much God love us, but before we can get too big of a head and let our egos run wild, Psalm 33's verses bring us back to earth. It reminds us of the real power of this world. It says no king can make it on its own, great armies will fail, and war horses will stumble. It reminds us that all our hope is in God's love. We are counting on it. We are depending on it. We are needing it once more. Psalm 33 reminds us it is only through God's love that we are empowered and strengthened to be the heart and hands of God in this world. God's love opens our eyes so that we see the world differently. Through God's eyes of love, we see that all are created in God's image and all are our sisters and brothers in faith.

Through God's eyes of love, we realize that we can help God transform the world, no matter what our headlines may say.

God's love is what gets us through the dark times. God's love is what makes our lives amazing. God's love has transformed us and has helped us become the people God created us and calls us to be.

As people of faith, we know that God's love is all we've got. God's love is all we need. God's love is what is filling our world. God's love is what we depending on now and forevermore.

It has never been about us. It has always been about God's love power to change and transform our world. And it all began the moment God said, Let there be light. Since the beginning of time, our world has been filled with God's steadfast love and now it is our turn to share this amazing, life changing, life giving, life transforming news with all of God's creation.

May we always experience the transforming and life giving power of God's love today and all days, always seeing the world through God's eyes of love.

Amen.