



## **Sermons from Northwood United Church**

**“Love’s in need of Love Today.”**

**Mark 3:20-35**

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May the words of my mouth, the meditations of our hearts and the actions of our lives be acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

“Love’s in need of love today. Don’t delay, send yours in right away. Hate’s goin’ ‘round breaking many hearts. Stop it please before it’s gone too far.”

These words have been ringing in my head this week as I came home from BC Conference meeting last weekend, as I read the story of Jesus going toe to toe with the religious authorities of his day and even having his family come and try to drag him home, and frankly, as I simply try and figure out what faithful living looks like for me and us this week. Love’s in need of love today.

Deb Bowman in her address as President of BC Conference spoke of love like this. She said, “Love of course requires relationship – at a minimum with one other, and at our most fulsome faithfulness with all creation. And love requires courage; the love of God, is not an abstract, sentimental noun but an active verb that entails action, response, compassion, risk. It is not about just superficially getting along, I read somewhere that ‘tolerance’ is actually just submerged rage. But love, real love, calls for engaging with each other even in loving conflict, in beloved disagreement. In the church we often back away from honest, loving conflict. We have some sense that a loving community doesn’t fight – as if disagreements never break out at the dinner table in your home. But it is possible to disagree, to be opposed to one another, and to still love one another.”

You see I think that’s what Jesus discovered, that love can actually draw you into conflict with your brothers and sisters, and that is ok. In fact it may well end up being a requirement, to at least be willing to face conflict on behalf of love in need of love today. Let’s look at what Jesus faced on behalf of love.

A couple of things we know. He lived in Palestine under Roman occupation. His community, like so many under dominating foreign or even domestic powers, tolerated injustice habitually, just to survive. Nobody dares poke their head up and question the brutality of Rome, nor the complicity of their own political and religious leadership in making friends with Roman power and using the temple authority to keep people quiet and Rome happy.

But Jesus dared confront all this. First of all, he called together a band of peasants and educated them on the injustice of the system. Second, he actually went into the synagogues, where leaders have power, and homes, where families have power, and proclaimed a message of justice, dignity and love exposing the injustice, indignity and lovelessness of the political, social and religious system in which he lived. Rome maintained power very cleverly. They would squeeze the peasantry economically through taxation and the acquisition of land, and by conscripting local authorities to use local customs to keep the peasantry under control. Everybody knew this in their bones. Jesus actually started saying it. That is what got him in trouble.

And in today’s reading, the religious authorities try to call him a lover of Satan, which was back then not a term to describe some cult activity, but simply God’s official opposition. They were trying to say that they represent God’s authority and he represents opposition to God. But he said no. They were not representing the God of love, justice and dignity that they were

supposed to represent. In fact that God was in need of love today because they had neglected their God . Jesus represents the voice of love which speaks the truth and those who cannot bear the truth try to silence him.

Love is still in need of love today, this courageous love which speaks the truth. I sat around a table at the pub last week at BC Conference meeting and heard the truth of 3 native elders as they spoke of their experiences at Indian Residential Schools. Alvin Dixon, Ray Jones and Jim White taught me how the combination of being pushed off the land without treaty, and being forced to become little white Europeans at residential schools has affected them and their communities. They spoke of the powerful importance of the truth and reconciliation process that is presently underway in Canada and how that process is in need of our love today.

I learned of the Musqueam who are, right now, protesting a condo development which threatens a burial site in south Vancouver where somewhere around 700 of their ancestors are buried. The voice of love calls us to confront a legacy of taking land without treaty, and it will continue to call and will not go away until we hear the truth, and come, by grace, to reconcile.

The voice of love doesn't simply call from the past either. I am thinking of Elmer. Some of you who work in the thrift store will remember Elmer who lived among us for a couple of years, worked hard in the thrift store, and at Elim Seniors housing in food service. Elmer was not a political refugee, but is simply a husband and father who was unable in his home country to crawl out from under poverty. He was not allowed to stay or to bring his family here because he didn't have enough points by way of skills and training or simply cash to be allowed to stay. So he was sent home. And many of us at the time looked at the way our immigration process dealt with Elmer and thought, love is in need of love today.

And even today, though Kerry and I are bound by the requirements of confidentiality, I can tell you that there is another person who actually is a political refugee, who lives in our community as a refugee, whose family has lived for over a year in hiding in his home country under death threat. Our country has made it really hard to welcome this stranger- to be a Christian to him. At first he wasn't allowed to work. Now this tradesman, skilled worker, works for \$9/hour, lives under hard circumstances, separated from his wife and two small children, and still is able to send money home to care for them. Who among us could pull that off? Our system makes it really hard for people. It makes it really hard for you and I to love the way we really want to love.

The voice of love calls from the world, and it is not just saying, "be kind to one another." That voice is saying, "let justice roll down like waters and peace like an ever-flowing stream." It is saying "whatever you do for the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do to me." It is saying "All who are hungry or thirsty, or are simply in need of the healing grace of love, come join me at the table here, and at the table of love and justice in the world."

So friends, do you hear the voice of love calling? Come to the table and be nourished so that you can act courageously, in the ways of Jesus for the sake of love today. Amen.