

May 15, 2022
Fifth Sunday of Easter

Meditation: I Love You.

It may be the fifth Sunday in the season of Easter, but today's reading took me right back to Holy Week, to Maundy Thursday to be specific. You know, Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday. Maundy Thursday, when the Last Supper was held in the upper room, and Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, and he gave them a new mandatum (that's where Maundy Thursday gets its name.... mandatum), or, if you prefer English instead of Latin, a new mandate or commandment: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

There's something I've always wondered about the second part of that commandment. When Jesus said, "as I have loved you, so you must love" did he mean "because I loved you, therefore you must love also," or did he mean "in the same manner that I loved you, you must love others?" This is the challenge of interpreting scripture, especially when it was translated from one language to another to another. Things can easily get mistranslated or lost altogether if one language does not have an adequate equivalent from one language to another. So, what do you think? Did Jesus mean because he first loved us, so we must also love others? Or, did Jesus mean that we must love others in the same manner as Jesus loved us?

So, if we pick the second alternative, that we must love others in the same manner that Jesus loved us, that begs the question, in what manner did Jesus love us? What do you think?

I think the answer is 'unconditionally.' Jesus loved us unconditionally. He did not allow the possible consequences of loving us to stop him from loving us. Rather, he considered the cost of not loving us unconditionally. For me, God is unconditional love. In fact, I think that, prior to creation, God loved so much that the love could not be contained. I think that creation is the result of the outpouring of God's love beyond Godself.

And that is not the only place I have seen unconditional love that could not be contained. I've seen that unconditional love in the eyes of Ron and Shauna, at their wedding. I was blessed to have been a witness to the unconditional love that they have for one another on that day. And it is a love that could not be contained just between the two of them. Oh no. Because along came Kaidan, and then Chloe. The unconditional love that Ron and Shauna have for one another has expanded to include Kaidan, and expanded again to include Chloe.

And just to bring this full circle, we gather here today to witness the unconditional love of God for Chloe. That's what a sacrament is – an outward, visible sign of the invisible love of God. And when we participate in a sacrament, like today's baptism, we are reminded that not only is Chloe loved unconditionally by God, but we too are loved unconditionally by God, even when we behave with less than Christian love towards one another.

For weeks now I've been thinking about how exciting it is to be holding a baptism today, not because we are finally at a point in the pandemic where we can have a baptism, but because today our love, as a congregation, as a denomination, as the global body of Christ, expands to welcome and include Chloe. Today, God's "I love you," to us becomes our "I love you," to one more member of God's family. Now that's exciting. Thanks be to God.