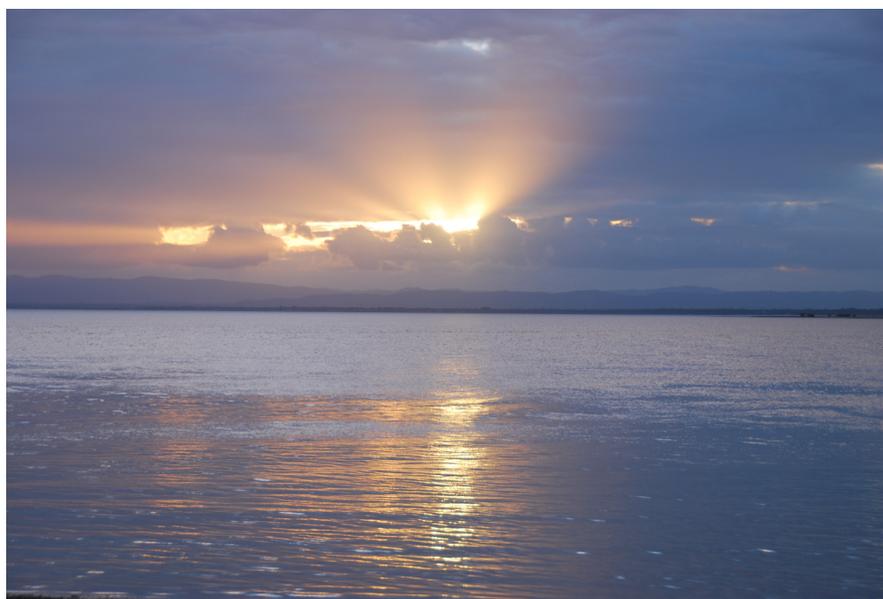


FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

- *love* -

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...

(Mark 6:31)



Not only was the Holy Spirit the source of power, bringer of joy, teacher of truth, convictor of sin, and the fire that ignited the church - he was also the force that worked transformation in the lives of the disciples.

When the Holy Spirit came upon these men and women their lives were changed totally – and their characters began more and more to reflect the God they followed.

We are all familiar with the fruit of the Spirit and how these are growing in our lives as we allow the Spirit to work in us. And we are probably also all aware of how much more we need to see this fruit develop and become more evident in us and in our faith communities. Perhaps it is time to reflect more deeply on this aspect of the Spirit's work.

This month we will be focussing on love. It is both a command and a gift the Spirit allows to flourish in us. It is the foundation of all we are and all we do; the very basis of our relationship with the Father and our connection with the world around us; and almost impossible without the ongoing work of the Spirit within.

(on-line link) <https://youtu.be/1IS7upjX67E>

LOVE - FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Call to worship

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

His love endures forever.

² Give thanks to the God of gods.

His love endures forever.

³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

His love endures forever.

⁴ to him who alone does great wonders,

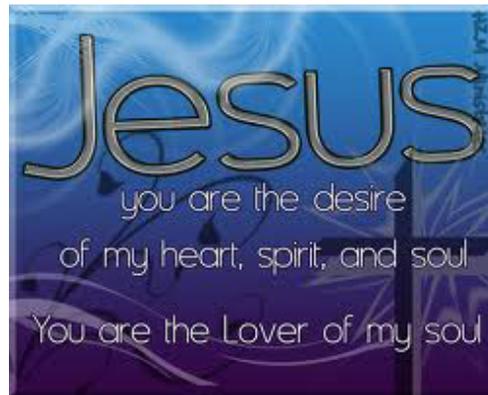
His love endures forever.

⁵ who by his understanding made the heavens.

His love endures forever.

Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His love endures forever.



(Psalm 136:1-4,26)

Scripture

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:7-11

Prayer

Father of love, you have poured your love into our hearts and made us your sons and daughters.
Jesus, son of love, your love has brought us life and freed us from sin and guilt.
Spirit of love, you grow the love of God in our hearts and perfect us in the way of loving.
Triune God, through whom all love comes and all love flows,
Fill us anew with the healing power of your love
And free us from all impurity and false perceptions of love,
In the name of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ⁱ

SONG

Sitting at Your feet is where I want to be
I'm home when I am here with You
Ruined by Your grace, enamoured by Your gaze
I can't resist the tenderness of You

I'm deep in love with You, Abba Father
I'm deep in love with You, Lord
My heart it beats for You, precious Jesus
I'm deep in love with You, Lord

Humbled and amazed that You would call my name
I never have to search again
There's a deep desire that's burning like a fire
To know You as my closest Friend

I'm deep in love with You, Abba Father
I'm deep in love with You, Lord
My heart it beats for You, precious Jesus
I'm deep in love with You, Lord [x2]

Lord, my Redeemer, Your blood runs through my veins
My love for You is deeper than it was yesterday
I enter through the curtain parted by Your grace
Lord, You're the Lover of my soul

You're the Lover of my soul
I'm deep in love with You, Lord

I'm deep in love with You, Abba Father
I'm deep in love with You, Lord
My heart it beats for You, precious Jesus
I'm deep in love with You, Lord

Scripture

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

And that is what we are!

For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

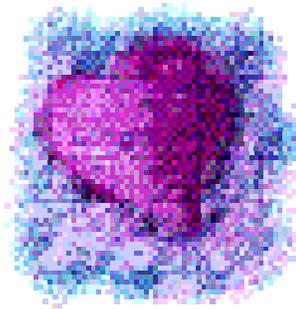
(from 1 John 3)

Prayer

O Love, O God, who created me, in your love recreate me.

O Love, who redeemed me, fill up in me whatever part of your love has fallen into neglect within me.

O Love, o God, who first loved me, grant that with my whole heart, and with my whole soul, and with my whole strength, I may love you.ⁱⁱ



Scripture

Love God, your God, with your whole heart: love him with all that's in you, love him with all you've got!
(Deuteronomy 6:5 MSG)

Jesus said, "‘Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.’ This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ These two commands are pegs; everything in God’s Law and the Prophets hangs from them.”

(Matthew 22:37-40 MSG)

Reflection

Pilate famously (or perhaps infamously) asked, “What is truth?”

We could just as legitimately ask, “What is love?”

What is love?

In a world where the word ‘love’ is too easily bandied about, tossed out without much thought, it is difficult to know what love truly is and to recognise what we are meant to aim for.

We all, however, have clear ideas about what is not love.

We have all known at some stage what it is like to *not* be shown love.

And we all have a deep soul-need for giving and receiving love.

Where do we see love?

Reflect for a moment on where and when in your life you have experienced what you consider to be real love.

How would you describe it?

In what ways can you better live out this kind of love?

Write your own prayer about love.

SILENCE



Song

Over the mountains and the sea,
Your river runs with love for me,
and I will open up my heart
and let the Healer set me free.
I'm happy to be in the truth,
and I will daily lift my hands:
for I will always sing of when
Your love came down. [Yeah!]

I could sing of Your love forever,
I could sing of Your love forever,
I could sing of Your love forever,
I could sing of Your love forever. [Repeat]

Oh, I feel like dancing -
it's foolishness I know;
but, when the world has seen the light,
they will dance with joy,
like we're dancing now.

Scripture

Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,
Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8 MSG)

Prayer

O God of love, we ask you to give us love;
Love in our thinking, love in our speaking,
Love in our doing,
And love in the hidden places of our souls;
Love of those with whom we find it hard to bear,
And love of those who find it hard to bear with us;
Love of those with whom we work,
And love of those with whom we take our ease;
That so at length we may be worthy to dwell with you,
Who are eternal love.ⁱⁱⁱ

Song

Lord I come to You
Let my heart be changed, renewed
Flowing from the grace
That I found in You.
And Lord I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of Your love.

Hold me close, let Your love surround me
Bring me near, draw me to Your side.
And as I wait
I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love.

Lord unveil my eyes
Let me see You face to face
The knowledge of Your love
As You live in me.
Lord renew my mind
As Your will unfolds in my life
In living every day
by the power of Your love.

Hold me close let Your love surround
me
Bring me near draw me to Your side.
And as I wait
I'll rise up like the eagle
And I will soar with You
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love.

Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13



GOING DEEPER: Here are some suggestions that may help you to engage more deeply with this theme.

- **Reflect:**

When you think about love, what comes to mind?

Think for a moment about these words: “**what great love the Father has lavished on us.**”
What do they mean to you? How do you respond to this kind of love?

Perhaps God is inviting you to simply enjoy the awareness of being lavished with his love. What would this be like for you?

Is God calling you to any action so that you might more fully express the love of the Spirit?

Think about the times when you have not felt God’s love, or have not been able to show his love to others. What was going on in your life at that time? Is there anything you would like to change in how you experience the Spirit moving in your life?

Loving others the way God loves us can sometimes be very difficult. Is there someone in particular that comes to mind as you think about this? Pray for this person, and pray that God renews your love for him/her.

- **The Bible** is full of examples of God’s love. Think about one such example and find the text. Read it through and think about the context and what God is saying. Is there anything that God is saying to you about the love he has shown you or the love he asks you to show to others?
- You could use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**.
- **Visualise Scripture!** Read any Scripture passage that talks about love – there are plenty to choose from. After each verse, close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? What would it feel like if you were there? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- If you enjoy being **creative**, take some paper and some markers/coloured pencils/paints. Think about the many faces of love – God’s love for us, our love for him, and our love for others. Or consider what it means to love God with our whole heart and soul and strength. Draw, paint or collage what comes to mind. Ask God to guide your thinking and flip through a magazine or two, tearing/cutting out any pictures or words that show love. Make a collage from what you gather. Use clay to model an image that represents the love of God to you. Reflect on what it is like to create these images.
- Go for a **walk**. Take note of where you see God’s love for at work in the world around you. It might be something very simple. Spend time speaking with God about it.
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time worshipping together and praising God for the joy He gives you, even in difficult times.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

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THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

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SONGS

Deep in Love – Michael W. Smith (A New Hallelujah Track 8)

I could sing of your love forever – Martin Smith (The Best Worship Songs Ever, CD 3, Track 1)

Power of your love – Geoff Bullock (The Best Worship Songs Ever, CD 3, Track 8)

ⁱ J. Brown

ⁱⁱ St. Gertrude the Great (1256-c.1302)

ⁱⁱⁱ William Temple (1881-1944)