

“WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?”

Pastor Mike Corwin

1ST SUNDAY IN LENT

TEXT: MARK 12:41-44

SCRIPTURE: MARK 12:28-33

I – WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Anna Mae Bullock was just a talented teenager from Nutbush Tennessee when she met her Flashy dressing, song-writing husband-to-be in St. Louis in the 1950’s. They were later married and performed around the country together. Two decades after their marriage they divorced and she didn’t perform for a while. Then in 1985 she made her comeback with a song which won the Grammy’s that year for “SONG OF THE YEAR”, “RECORD OF THE YEAR”, AND “BEST FEMALE VOCAL PERFORMANCE OF THE YEAR.” 1985 was the year Anna Mae, now known as Tina Turner, sang the song “WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?”

Coming out of Advent where I preached about God’s love and entering into lent, I’m wondering if we shouldn’t look at this question a little deeper. What is this thing called love? What is this emotion that makes our pulse race, our hearts beat faster. How can this thing called love make us act like we’re brain dead from time to time? There must be something to it. On special days like Valentine’s Day we take our loved ones out to dinner, or get them a box of candy or some new jewelry. The very least we’ll do, if we’re smart, is get them a card that says I love you!

Think about this little four letter word for a moment...Love is what keeps husbands and wives from throwing in the towels when troubles come...love is what keeps us from disowning our children as they go through their stupid years...love is what makes us waste our money on all the new toys and gadgets for our grandchildren... WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? ...

II – EVERYTHING:

Everything! Of all the human emotions, love seems to last the longest and control our lives the most. Kids misbehave when they don’t get enough of it, wives complain when their husbands don’t say it enough, and some people spend their entire lives in pursuit of it. But none of this should surprise us...it’s Biblical. It’s the way God meant it to be. He wanted us and our lives to be controlled by this thing called love. In 1 John 4:8 we find these three words “GOD IS LOVE”, it’s given to us by the Apostle John as a statement of fact. If God is love, and we’re made in his

image, then it's no wonder it plays such an important part of our lives.

This thing called LOVE is so important Jesus says it supercedes all the other commandments, rules, and regulations we've been given to live by. He said that it should be what controls our relationship to God, and our relationship to each other. In this morning's reading Jesus has just ridden into the city of Jerusalem on the back of a donkey to begin what we call Holy Week. He gets up the next morning and goes to the Temple, where he gets mad chases the money changers out of the place of worship, sealing his fate with the religious leaders. He's asked questions by these leaders in the hopes of trapping him to get a reason to have him killed. The question you heard asked was this: Of all the commandments we've been given to live by (and there were quite a few by this time for the Jewish people) which one is the most important? Which one must we obey at all costs, follow no matter what, pay the closest attention to?

Jesus made it clear that the first and foremost Commandment was to love God. Not just give it lip service, but to really love God. Love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. In other words: Love God with your complete being.

Every part of you, every ounce of energy you have ought to be used to carry out this commandment.

III – TEXT:

After Jesus finished making this point he did some teaching to the people gathered about the prophecies of the Messiah, and then told them about the hypocrisy of the people who were in charge of their religion. It's at the conclusion of all of this that we find a story which tells us about how we should love God, and which touches Jesus with love...

Mark 12:41 - 44 (NLT)

⁴¹Jesus went over to the collection box in the Temple and sat and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. ⁴²Then a poor widow came and dropped in two pennies. ⁴³He called his disciples to him and said, "I assure you, this poor widow has given more than all the others have given. ⁴⁴For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has."

Jesus is tired. He's had a busy day turning over the tables of the moneychangers, teaching, preaching, and answering questions. His emotions are running high because he knows what's coming. He needs a little alone time. He went and found a bench to sit on opposite where the Temple collection boxes were. A series of 13 trumpet shaped boxes where the people could make their monetary payments to the Temple, in other words this is how they took up the collection. They didn't sit everybody down and pass plates; you put your money in the offering

as you entered. He sits there and watches the people as they do this and watches the rich people put in large amounts...but then his heart is touched. As he sits there watching this poor widow lady comes in to worship God. This poor widow lady loves her God so much that she puts in all that she has...puts in her last two cents. She probably has no one to take care of her or she wouldn't be a widow. She probably has to do other peoples wash or cleaning just to get some money for the little bit of food she can afford that she can't find laying on the ground in the surrounding fields. These two pennies probably mean she will have to go to bed hungry this night, yet she doesn't hold back...she drops both of them in the collection plate.

Jesus has been upset all day at the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. He's been upset since getting there in the morning and watching the moneychangers cheating the people and taking advantage of those who want to make a burnt offering to God. He's saddened and frustrated that society, especially the church, has come to treat their God, his Father, with such little love and respect. Just as he thinks there's little hope left, along comes this poor widow lady with an act of love, which surpasses all the others.

Jesus is so touched that he calls his disciples over to him and teaches them about this act of love. He tells them that the rich are putting in their required 10%, but that it's not much of a sacrifice when you have money coming out of your ears...when you have so much money you will never have to worry where your next meal will come from. These people are doing their duty and that's not always an act of love, yet here's a woman who puts in everything she has for God. She loves him and trusts him so much she keeps nothing back. She doesn't guard her heart, but gives it all to God, gives him all of her love.

Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt at that moment? He's getting ready to be the sacrifice for all of our sins, he's getting ready to get nailed to a tree as God's love offering to the world, he's been thinking whether or not these people called humans are even worth such a sacrifice and then along comes one poor widow and shows him it is indeed worth it. Some people have gotten the message, some people do care, and some people do love God with all their hearts, all their souls, all their mind, and all their strength. His dying will not be in vain!

IV – THE PAPERWEIGHT:

On the left hand side of my desk at home you'll usually find a stack of papers and mail sitting. These are the things that come in during the week and I stack them there until Saturday night. That's when I usually sit down and go through them, pay them, file them, or throw them away because they didn't turn out to be important anyhow. To keep them from falling off and getting scattered I keep this really special paperweight on the top of the pile.

Now over the years I've accumulated a modest collection of paperweights. I've been given ones from different places around town where I was a policeman. I've got one that has a picture of

Bucyrus City Hall inside it. I've even got two fancy ones from the Red Cross made out of white marble with their logo and a raised cross on the top which were given to me for using CPR to save a life both times. You will find none of these holding down my papers. Instead, you'll find this simple homemade clay face with bulging eyes, which was made by my 11-year-old granddaughter Makenzie.

This paperweight means more to me than all the others because it was given to me out of complete love. She made this with her own two hands. It was an art project and she made only one of them. It's unique and will never be made again. She could have given it to her mother or father; she could have kept it for herself, she could have stuck it in a box to show her own children someday, but she didn't...she gave it away...to me. She brought it to the house to show it to grandma and me because she was proud of it, and she stood in my office I could see the wheels working in her little head. She started to give it to me a couple of times then pulled it back to her. She finally said it looked like me and gave it to me, not because she had to, not because she had a lot of them, because she loved me. She gave all she had out of love. I'll make you a bet that paperweight will always have a place on my desk.

V – LOVE GOD:

So I'm wondering this morning...when it comes to your relationship to God..."WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?" Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength or do you just love God when it's convenient? Does God come first in your life, or are there other things, other idols, ahead of God in the line for love? Whether we're talking about money, time, prayer, or worship...do you give to God as the rich religious people, or as the poor widow lady who so touched the heart of Jesus that day in the Temple? I'm wondering...if I could see the top of God's desk this day, would there be something on it that you've given him which shows how much you love him? I wonder...if your heart's on display in his office.

This Lenten season we'll be looking at some of the various people associated with the story of Holy Week and the sacrifices they made out of love to the God who loved them. We'll be looking at how they followed Jesus command to "TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME." The story this morning of the poor widow lady begs me to ask you this question: how do you use your money to follow Jesus, to show love to God? Spend the week in prayer and contemplation over this question and see where God leads your heart.

In John 3:16, the most widely known verse in the Bible, we see that "GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON." God gave to you the way the widow gave to God...he gave his all. In return...what have you given to God?

AMEN