

Power of Love  
Sermon Feb 12, 2023

Story

Once upon a time, there was an island where all the feelings lived: Happiness, Sadness, Anger, Love, Trust, the rest of the feelings, and others who accompany feelings, including Wisdom and Time. One day everyone realized that the island was sinking, so everyone built boats and got ready to leave.

Love was the last one on the island. Love wanted to hold out until the last possible moment. But when that moment came and Love wanted to leave, they found themselves without a boat. Someone must have taken it!

Greed was passing by in a huge yacht. Love shouted, "Greed, can you take me with you?"

Greed answered, "No, I can't. There is a lot of gold and silver in my yacht. There is no place here for you."

Love next called to Vanity, who was passing by in a beautiful vessel. "Vanity, please help me!"

"I can't help you, Love. You are all wet and might damage my boat," Vanity answered.

Sadness also passed close by, and Love asked, "Sadness, let me go with you."

"Oh . . . Love, I am so sad that I need to be by myself!"

Happiness passed by too, but they were so happy that they didn't even hear when Love called.

And then Love heard an unfamiliar, elderly voice, "Come, I will take you."

Feeling blessed and overjoyed, Love didn't even pay attention to who had picked them up. When they arrived at dry land, the elderly captain went their own way. Realizing how much was owed to the elder, Love asked Wisdom, "Who was that who helped me?"

"That was Time," answered Wisdom .

“Time?” asked Love. “But why did Time help me?”

Wisdom smiled. “Because only Time is capable of understanding how valuable Love is.”

*Love and Time became inseparable. Time knows how valuable love is and only in the absence of our loved ones, we realize their love and care for us.*

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- Soul Matters theme for February is love
  - Valentine’s Day in February has something to do with selecting this theme!
    - Valentine's Day = Romantic Love
    - relationships, intimacy
      - deep romantic or sexual attraction
      - Hearts and chocolate and special meals
      - Most Scorpios result from this date
      - These are valuable things
  - February holiday lies atop more ancient European pagan festivals
    - Roman Lupercalia - fertility (mating season)
      - Romantic love and attraction
    - Roman Februa - purifications
    - So is this a time of "pure love?"
  - Love is not limited to romance - it can take many other forms. Greek philosophy has seven unique words for love:
    - Eros: erotic, passionate love
    - Storge (store-gay): love of parents for children
    - Philia: (fill-ee-ah) love of friends and equals
    - Xenia (zee-nee-uh) hospitality shown to guests
    - Philautia (fee-lav-TEE-ah) "self-love"
    - Agape (ah-gah-pay): love of mankind
- Which love are we talking about?
  - The Affirmation spoken at least every week begins with love
    - "Love is the doctrine of this church..."
      - "Doctrine" is a statement of beliefs
        - doesn't do justice to what love is all about.
        - Love must be learned, practiced, and felt
    - Which type of love? All of them!

- Definition: complex mix of emotions, behaviors, and beliefs associated with strong feelings of affection, protectiveness, warmth, and respect
- is a virtue represents kindness and compassion; unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for somebody or something's well-being
  - Could be directed toward
    - Others (Family, Friends, Partners)
    - Ourselves
    - Communities
- Pagan / Nature
  - Celtic Imbolc -
    - halfway point between winter and spring
    - translates as "in the belly," referring to pregnant sheep.
    - Love of mother for child - Storge
  - Love in the animal kingdom
    - parents care for their offspring
    - Power of connection
      - animals form bonds with their mates (Eros / Philia)
      - Some form larger communities (Philia / Agape)
      - different species and ecosystems come together to form a harmonious whole (Agape)
- Love is:
  - deeply ingrained in the natural world around us
  - a fundamental aspect of pagan spiritual practice
  - a source of power in the natural world
    - power that connects us to one another and to the world around us
      - the bond that connects all living things
      - the powerful force that binds the universe together
    - power that shapes our lives and our world.
    - power that creates and sustains all life
  - a lesson for our own lives and relationships
- Goddesses and gods of many traditions
  - often associated with love and fertility
  - They teach about the different aspects of love
  - Provide examples/mirrors of how we might live
- Freya: power of love and desire
- Freyr: abundance and prosperity that come from love
- Frigga: love and devotion of a mother
- Odin: love and sacrifice of a father.

- Human Love is
  - a fundamental aspect of our human experience.
  - not just an emotion
    - a power that shapes our lives and our world.
    - the bond that connects us to one another and to the divine
    - the source of all beauty, joy, and wonder.
  - A transformative force
    - Brings people together
    - Heals wounds
    - Inspiration
  - the bond that connects us to:
    - Family
    - Friends
    - Communities
      - Strangers
    - Ancestors
  - expressed through words, actions, or deeds
  - inclusive and universal
    - not limited by race, gender, orientation, religion, any form of identity.
    - We are all worthy of love
    - We should strive to extend love and compassion.
  - not just about finding the right person, but about *becoming* the right person.
    - We must first love ourselves before we can truly love others.
    - When we give love, we receive love in return.
  - True love is.
    - about putting the needs and happiness of others before our own.
    - about sacrifice and selflessness.
  
- Love is not always easy
  - requires effort and commitment
  - Love is
    - facing our fears and growing through our challenges
    - being vulnerable and open to change.
  - When we open ourselves up to love, we open ourselves up to the possibility of great joy - and great pain.
  - Bringing love to bear in every encounter requires enormous energy, discipline, focus, resolve, and courage.
  - Love can't be controlled, but can be cultivated

- What else can we do?
  - Keep trying.
  - Patience
    - creates a gateway for love to enter into our most difficult situations
      - anger, frustration, disappointment, fear, and anxiety can pour out of us before we even have a chance to think.
      - Those emotions may be understandable, justifiable, even necessary.
      - Patience is reminding ourselves to breathe, to wait, to not speak, to listen more closely not only to the other, but to what love asks of me in the situation.
- Agape: the long game = the connection between Love and Time (opening parable)
  - Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”
    - Love rarely drives out hate quickly - in an instant, a day, or even a decade.
    - Love drives out hate because it takes the long view, because it persists and endures.
    - Love drives out hate because it keeps coming, keeps trying, keeps organizing, singing, speaking, taking all the punishments that hate dishes out.
  - Trusting love itself
    - love has power greater than anything else we can bring to bear
    - when we act out of love, regardless of how it is received in the moment, we can move any situation—over time—towards healing, peace, justice, and reconciliation.
    - Trust in love's power
      - Love can seem difficult to sustain
        - can feel like a naïve answer to the world’s problems
      - Trust that if we keep trying to let love rise in us, to let love speak through us, to bring love to bear, then we will learn
- Back to the season: the power of February is knowing that the flowers will come back, because nature always keeps trying
- Likewise the power of love is that humanity will learn to love, if we just keep trying.

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- Closing Words

- Gratitude: Take a moment to reflect on the love in our lives and to give thanks for the love that surrounds us.
- Strive to
  - treat ourselves and others with kindness, compassion, and understanding
  - show love to others through acts of forgiveness and service.
  - embody love in all aspects of our lives
  - love more deeply and fully, not just today, but every day.
- Blessings: May we
  - love ourselves and each other with all our hearts
  - honor the sacred force of love in our lives and in the world around us
  - be open to receiving love and giving love
- May the love in our hearts, that which connects us all, guide us on our journey, and may it bring peace, joy, and happiness to all