**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**May 15th, 2022**

**The Cost of Love**

1. The One Sermon You’ll Preach…

I remember my first semester of Preaching at seminary very well

and the advisement from a well-loved professor who said, “All your life, you will preach one sermon.” What I came to understand about her statement is that no matter what Scripture lesson you would choose or the liturgical calendar, either spoken or unspoken, there would be a theme that would always be at the core of what you preach. For some, it would be faithfulness, for others, the call to discipleship or the desire to be anchored on the hope that comes with salvation. All of these themes are important, they are vital in fact to any living and breathing community of faith, but I soon found out what my sermon would always come back around to, and that is the theme of love.

 For me, love is everything. Love is how we entered this world, Love is what created everything around us, Love is how we are welcomed to our eternal home. Love is the greatest motivator to action, and the surest sign of defining who we are as disciples. Love is best seen in the act of salvation and love makes the impossible possible. As you can tell, I’m passionate about the theme of love and I guess that’s because one of the first things I ever learned about God at a young age is that God is love.

 We hear it the mercy and grace of God every Sunday, as we admit our sins and faults and God continues to forgive again and again. We feel it in the unconditional love of God made real through the Spirit. For me to be at the pulpit week after week, it’s that love that brings me here. As the song writers and poets and artists of all times and places proclaim – love is what makes the world turn ‘round. For me, I find that love in God.

1. The cost of love

This Sunday though, I come with a different challenge than I

have before. I knew that loving people who were mean would be difficult and I know that love is often not easy when someone pushes you to your edge, but this week, I found another dilemma.

 As the Price family came together at a funeral to commemorate a life lost too soon, love took on a different pitch. Bryan and I started to have more conversations, and one of the most poignant things he’s reminded me of is that love comes at a cost. Grief is indeed the cost of love. To love is messy, it’s vulnerable, and it requires us to acknowledge that at one time or another, we will love those whom we love.

Love is also putting your heart out on your shoulder, risking reputation and confidence. I remember one of those cutting moments, when I said, “I love you” and person responded, “thank you.” Love is being okay with the fact that you might not receive love back, but rather that it is gift, and sometimes, again, as the artists of all time say, love hurts.

 I think about the disciples in this text as they hear that Jesus will only be with them a short time more and no matter how hard they look, they cannot go where he will go. They love him so much, and I imagine, even if they understood all the theological reasons in the world, that it would still hurt. They love Jesus and they cherish all that he has shared with them and now they have to say goodbye on this side of the earthly veil. Loving Jesus has been a gift, but it comes at a cost, and the disciples feel it right in this moment.

1. The Word

Love is a gift, but it also comes at a cost, but Jesus’ call to love remains the same. He tells his disciples to love. You’ll note that there are no if/and clauses here. This isn’t, “Love people if they believe what you do” or “Love people if they are kind and nice and have a great personality.” The command is as simple and as hard as it is written – have love for one another.

This is the greatest commandment, the golden rule. If we’ve watched the life of Jesus, the life of God, the movement of the Holy Spirit, we see that love is the propelling force. It makes beautiful sense that as Jesus leaves his earthly kingdom, he’s calling all to remember the essence of his work and to keep it alive.

The disciples back then tangibly saw Jesus’ love, they knew how it felt, they understood what it meant, and they were personally touched by the divine power of that love. Jesus didn’t say they needed to love perfectly, get it right the first time, but that love is what they need to be striving for in all they think, do, and say.

1. Disciples Now

In our modern day experience, away from the streets of

Jerusalem or the paths of Bethlehem, we need to re-engage in this call to love and think about how people will know that we are Christians by our love in our environment.

 I ask you to take a moment to think about your Jerusalem, or rather, where you spend most of your days. Is it in a classroom, or a professional building, or at home? What is your landscape? Take a moment to sit in that space and think about the people you encounter, the actions that take place day to day, the routines that you nearly forget about.

 Where, in your everyday life, can you infuse love? I can’t answer this well for you because I am not in your shoes on a daily basis. If you are looking for a few simple solutions though, love might be in the easiest exchanges – a phone call to say hello, a smile and nod to someone on the sidewalk, or an offer to help someone to get their groceries to the car. That’s first tier, so I’d say there’s a medium level of challenge and that would be – asking someone how they are doing and really inviting them to answer fully and honestly without judgment or advice, or making a point to deliver a meal to someone you know might not ask for it but needs some comfort food, or taking on another responsibility so that someone else’s load might be lightened. And then there’s the tough, boots on the ground, kind of love that is out of the blue and unexpected – being willing to sit in the waiting room with someone as they anticipate health news, serving your local shelter or donating your time, talent, or funds to them, or when asked to go on a mission, like the Baltimore-Dakota partnership, to move out of your comfort zone and follow the call.

 I can’t know what exactly you are called to, but I do know whatever it is will be love in action. Whatever it may be, know that love is a gift, it is one that is meant to be freely shared because love has been so freely shared by God. Be tender with your heart, because love indeed comes at a cost, but it is often a blessing that far far outweighs the cost. So go into this world, dare to love and be loved, and may this love always point to the one who loved us first, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.