

Looking for Love

It is February! While many think of this as the month when winter has lost its charm and we are so over it, I prefer to think of it as the month of love. Even when I was growing up, my favorite holiday that we observed in school was Valentine's Day. I loved decorating that shoebox or tissue box that would receive valentines. I loved the only candy (chocolate) holiday between Christmas and Easter. I loved making valentines at home with doilies and glitter and construction paper. Why do we not wrap ourselves up with thinking about love for this whole month? If television stations can broadcast a month of horror in October, why not a month of love in February?

There is a value in being mindful and attentive to positive values and models of life. It is a tool that the Apostle Paul used often in his letters. Granted, he was not infrequently holding up his own life as a model, but he also included morality lists that were common features of ethics teaching in his day. I Corinthians 13, the LOVE chapter, is a model lesson on a virtue: love. Paul used love language frequently beyond this chapter. "Love one another" he says all the time.

As I was spending time with I Corinthians 13 over the past weekend, we also visited our daughter and husband, and dog, Barley. Barley is a rescue dog, a mix of Corgi and Bassett (I think). He was older when they adopted him, and at times it seemed that he was so damaged in relationships with people and other dogs that he would be impossible to ever have around visitors, and Maren and Brock are very social people. But they have been endlessly patient and kind with Barley. Through careful physical care he is more comfortable and lively. They have learned all of his signals about what he likes or dislikes around people. They will tell you when to pet him, or stop petting him, or ignore him. He has routines and rules that keep him safe and everyone comfortable. This is what love looks like. While I am using a relationship with a dog as an example, I believe there are lessons here about relationships with others, which is what Paul was talking about.

I read a folktale once about a woman who goes to a wise teacher with concerns about her marriage. She believes that her husband no longer loves her. The teacher gives her a task: collect three whiskers from a lion and bring them to the teacher as payment for the solution to her problem. The woman spends seasons patiently and lovingly getting to know a lion to the point where she can pluck three whiskers. As you have probably guessed, when she brings them to the teacher she is told that the same patience and caring can be the basis of a loving relationship with her husband.

God, may I grow in patience, kindness, understanding, selflessness. May I look for and follow models of love in scriptures and in the world. Amen.

by Rev Karen Oehl

*Love is patient, love
is kind, it isn't
jealous, it doesn't
brag, it isn't
arrogant, it isn't
rude, it doesn't seek
its own advantage,
it isn't irritable,
it doesn't keep a
record of
complaints.*

I Corinthians 13:4,5

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