


THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



May 15, 2022

TRUST

it's hard to love without it

by Drew Downs

For a lot of people, love is about that state of euphoria we're in when we fall in love. Or it is the relationship that stands firm against the test of time. It is the product of a storybook connection.

The thing about love is it always requires intimacy. And intimacy comes through trust.

When we trust another human being to love us the way we love them? To be there in the

worst of times and when we are at our ugliest? These are the substance of wedding vows, of course. And we all hold onto that stuff as if this weren't incredibly dangerous and frightening! As if opening ourselves to another human being and *trusting* they won't hurt us were something our culture values.

But it is the foundation of what God offers us through love. An incomparable freedom that comes *through* intimacy and trust.

EASTER

Spring 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

There's a funny rhythm to the church calendar. We begin around Thanksgiving with the first Sunday in Advent. Which is a funny, four-week season of anticipation. It is also one that has traditions that we add to our lives, often calendars and wreathes, which we use to mark the time.

Another season with a particular "add-to-my-life" character is Lent; a season famous for *taking on* and *abstaining* with a discipline of devotion. We're used to doing things *differently*.

Easter, on the other hand, has, in recent years, taken on a "phew-it's-done!" character. Lent is over and the haul that is Holy Week leads to some sleeping in and resting that first week at least.

But Easter is also often graduation season and planning summer trips. It is a time in which we begin planning and doing things differently. Not because the church calendar encourages any of this, but because our secular calendars do. It is a season of celebration, yes. But also rest and restoration. So it seems that we have an interesting dance in the Easter season.

One thing that we will be trying out over the next two months is a new Bible Conversation beginning on Wednesday, May 18 at 11 am. We will be reading the Bible, one chapter at a time. But there's a wrinkle to it. And you may just have to see it for yourselves to see what that is.

With love,
Drew

EASTER

Spring 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 15, 2022

Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From John 13:31-35

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Reflection

We should probably begin by stating for the record that this isn't actually a "new commandment". It is pretty much *the* commandment Jesus has offered frequently as a reflection of his traditional faith. This reads as far more like a rhetorical flourish than it does an earnest depiction of theological tradition.

Of course, when we obsess about this being a *new* command, we might overlook the more significant word in that phrase. Command.

This is not a new suggestion. Not a "Hey everybody, don't you think you oughta try love for once?"

It is not a new invitation. "I've got a great bargain on love: buy one get one!"

EASTER

We so often treat the teachings of Jesus like they are optional. Like he isn't trying to help us change our behavior. As if this were all just about getting us to be a little nicer. Maybe a little *more* loving and a little *less*...hating. As if Jesus goes around saying: "Now, I know you want him dead, but try simply hating the guy in secret a little!" It's all so absurd!

Jesus commands his followers to love. We are *obligated* to love. Not try loving until it gets hard. And certainly not *think about loving this time, if you get around to it!*

As much as we know that this is what Jesus has commanded us to do, **and** as much as we like to pretend it is, instead, more like a strong suggestion, we mostly just like making excuses for *not* loving. *Or* creating gotchas to catch someone else *not* loving. That one is one of our favorite past times. We collect hypocrites like trading cards.

This is particularly easy in matters of politics. The Left can find it among the Right. The Right can find it among the Left. And independents LOVE finding it among "both sides."

We also love finding the lack of love from our leaders, neighbors, and family members. All the people around us who just seem to be so terrible at love. Just not ourselves.

Perfectionists are particularly good at collecting failed loves. Especially naming a list like this one as proof of *my* failure at love. Of course, this all misses the point. And quite dramatically so.

We aren't in the business of perfection—never failing. We're commanded to love. And that we will be known by our love. Because people will see us and the love within us and *know* that we are in the hands of God. Because the love will radiate out of us. Keeping track of love isn't our work. Radiating it is. And you are quite capable of that.

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