**Season of Creation 2: Love Me. (Isaiah 42:5-5; John 13:33-35)**

I find it interesting that World Wide Communion falls right in the middle of the liturgical season called the Season of Creation. And I wonder – why is that?

What are we perhaps to learn from that?

My thoughts immediately go to the creation story in Genesis. In this story we hear that God created light and darkness, earth and seas, plants and creatures, and then finally humans:

Genesis 1:27 tells us:

 *So God created humankind in God’s image, in the image of God they were created; male and female, God created them.*

Genesis is just one of the various stories and explanations of creation – and whether you believe it or not is not important – what is important is that ALL the stories of creation remind us that human life is part of creation.

We are part of Creation. In the same way that animals and fish, trees and plants, earth and see are part of creation – so too are we!

So, in the season of Creation when we are often encouraged to reflect on how we treat creation – we are also called to think about how do we treat each other?

We are not called to just take care of the environment – we are called to take care of ALL creation – and that includes humankind!

Perhaps that is why World Wide Communion fits so perfectly into the Season of Creation.

The Oxford definition of communion, with a small ‘c’ is:

*“the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level.”*

 What might that exchange look like?

I am sure that many of you do share your thoughts and feelings with friends or loved ones. You might encourage each other when you are feeling mentally overwhelmed, or just down in your spirits. You might even pray together to encourage and share spiritually.

But what might this exchange look like when we think of people outside out friendship group?

Today as we celebrate World Wide Communion – we are reminded that we are called to have this intimacy not just with friends that we know and love, but also with others globally.

In our scripture in Isaiah today, the prophet says:

 “*I have set you among my people to bind them to me,”*Among my people.

Who does that mean? “*Among my people.”*

Who are God’s people?

It’s the same question that the lawyer asked, after Jesus told him that to enter the kingdom of heaven he must “*love his neighbor*” – the lawyer says “*but* *who is my neighbor.”*(Luke 10: 29)

And Jesus goes onto to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan – reminding us that EVERYONE is our neighbor.

That we are put our prejudices aside and love everyone.

All people are God’s people!

I wonder what prejudices you may need to overcome to include all of God’s people?

Recently I was talking to a senior who will soon be 90. I admire the way in which she is quite progressive in her thinking. She doesn’t question her grandchildren’s decisions to have children without being married; she openly accepts her gay grandson and his partner; and she is quite liberal in her thinking. But when talking with her about the recent election she said “I just can’t imagine that NDP man being prime minister” - and when asked if that was because of the way Jagmeet Singh looked - she just kind of said “Well….”

I don’t think she is alone in her thinking.

We all have inherent prejudices.

When *you* think of ‘who is your neighbor’, does it include –

- someone’s who has a different skin color to your own?

- someone who choses to practice a different faith?

- someone who has a different sexual orientation to your own?

- someone who has a different economic status?

- someone beyond our church community?

Because loving ***everyone*** includes all nationalities, all faiths, all members of the LGBTQ community, and all people, rich or poor.

It includes ALL of God’s people.

I think right now we need to seriously think about this new term “anti-vaxxers.” Yes, we might have concerns over our own safety, but as soon as we create a division of ‘us’ and ‘them’ – then we are not living out our command to love all people.

I find myself wondering if Jesus would have been outspoken against anti-vaxxers? And I don’t think so.

In his ministry, Jesus actively went out of his way to eat with tax collectors, sit with those who had leprosy, and share the company of prostitutes.

Jesus went out of his way to demonstrate what it means to share love with all – and we are commanded to do that too!

Our scripture from John’s gospel today tells us that Jesus commanded us to:

 *Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another.* (John 13:34)

We are ***commanded*** to love one another.

We are not asked, we are not invited. It is not a suggestion – it is a command.

Jesus says:

 *Let me give you a new command: Love one another.*

Jesus knows that it is through loving one another that we bind each other to God.

That’s what Jesus did, when he loved us enough to die on the cross.

So, how can we show God’s love with each other, with the community, and with the world?

Well, here at Grace we do actively share God’s love by:

* Feeding the community through FFF. Our moto on the food that we hand out is “sharing God’s love through food and hospitality.” It’s a program not just for our community of faith, but for the whole of the Tavistock and area community – so if you know anyone in need of a meal, please let us know.
* Our Sit N Knit and Stay N Crochet group shares blankets and prayer squares with anyone who needs comfort. We have just delivered a package of knitted goods to Christian Aid for them to share globally with others. It’s not just for our members – but for all of God’s people.
* Our collections for TAP, and our Project Good Tidings at Christmas are another way that you share God’s love.
* In the weeks ahead we will be beginning mid-week worship in the condos and in seniors’ residences, where we will be bringing people into God’s light.

These are all ways that you already share God’s love with others.

So, what more can we do?

The United Church People in Partnership program gives regular stories of ways that your Mission and Service offerings help our global partners to bring God’s love to all people. We will be sharing these stories on a more regular basis in worship and in our newsletter.

You might not be in the position to give more money, but we are ALL in the position where we CAN pray for our global siblings.

And praying for others, is a way that we can intentionally love another.

So, today, as you come forward to take communion during this season of Creation;

as you join with your siblings around the world in this Holy Sacrament; as you remember Jesus’ love for you;

– I invite you to also take a moment to pause at Christ’s table,

and to renew your promise to follow the commandment that Jesus gave us.

 *Love one another, as I have love you!*

Amen.