



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 2021

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15, MARK 5:21-24, 38-43

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR DISCIPLES
AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

Do you remember where you were when you realized you were in love? Where were you when it hit you, that "I love this person!" For me, it was just a couple of blocks from here on Thomas Street. Where it hit me... "I am completely overwhelmed with love for Elizabeth Wimberly Lesto!" In fact, I'm not embarrassed to say it, following our date, I didn't walk home, I skipped home! But something else happened. The more I fell in love, the more I wanted to GIVE. The more I fell in love the more I wanted to GIVE my

- HEART
- My time
- my focus
- my attention
- my entire self!
- TO HER!

A love that culminated in marriage, and some years later, our first child. When Wimberly came around, it was the same thing all over again! I just wanted to give myself to her, my time, my heart! Fast forward to Father's Day last weekend, we moved Wimberly from college to her first job in Atlanta. It wasn't a duty, it was joy, a giving out of love! When we love, "the giving of ourselves becomes a keen hunger." Men, it's why we open up that car door for our spouses, and why we take out the trash. Giving of self is the proof of genuine love!

And this is what our reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthians is all about! Paul is in a bit of a war with the Corinthians over what genuine love really is. To get his point across, Paul points to the very

definition of Love, which is Jesus Christ. Let me take you to the second half of our Corinthians reading. In verse 9, Paul defines love through Jesus this way...

- Jesus, though He was rich
- YET for our sake
- He became poor-
- So that WE-
- by His Poverty
- might become rich.

What Paul is saying is that Jesus loves you and me so much, He GAVE Himself by leaving the riches, beauty, and glory of heaven to come to earth, and take on our poverty, meaning our sin, which would lead to the cross. This is true love...Jesus loving us so much He literally gives His heavenly and earthly life away. The result of Jesus giving Himself for us is that:

- We can be free from sin!
- Freed from those things we do that we hate
- Freed from our past
- Freed from regrets
- Freed to be with Jesus forever in eternity!

It was that great Scottish preacher of St. George's Tron, in Glasgow Scotland who put the love of Jesus this way:

JESUS EXCHANGED HIS RICHES

- FOR OUR POVERTY AS SINNERS

IN ORDER THAT WE

MIGHT EXCHANGE OUR POVERTY OF SIN...

- FOR HIS RICHES!

Now, that sounds so much better from a Scot who can roll his r's. But hear that definition of love again: Out of love..

- JESUS EXCHANGED HIS RICHES
 - (that is, his time in heaven)
- FOR OUR POVERTY
 - (that is, our sinful nature)
- IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT EXCHANGE OUR POVERTY
 - Our sinful nature
- FOR HIS RICHES!
 - Freedom from sin and eternity with Jesus!

Doesn't this just make you fall you fall in love with Jesus all over again? I read these words and I'm back skipping on Thomas Street! Christianity, and what Jesus has done for us is the greatest, most amazing love story ever told! No Hallmark movie can compete!!

It IS a true Love story, in fact, Jesus in loving us, desires the only thing I desired when I skipped down Thomas Street. Would, could Elizabeth return my love? Jesus only desires that His love be returned! How? By GIVING Our hearts to him. Lord, I love you! I GIVE you my heart. I GIVE you my life, my time, my all! It's this love that brings me back to the pulpit every Sunday! I'm not preaching out of duty, but in response to the Love of Jesus!

And I pray you who serve as:

- Greeters
- Ushers
- Altar guild
- Vestry
- Task Force Members

Do it not out of duty but out of love in response to what Jesus gave up for us! Oh my goodness! The Wizard of Westwood is right! Yes, John Wooden, long-time UCLA Basketball coach would agree with Paul, when he said:

IT IS POSSIBLE TO GIVE WITHOUT LOVING
BUT WE CAN'T LOVE WITHOUT GIVING!
LOVE IS NOTHING UNLESS WE GIVE IT AWAY!

So Paul at the end of our passage defines love and our giving response. But back up with me to the first part of our passage where Paul describes what a whole church looks like that has completely and utterly fallen in love with Jesus. Verses 1-7 present an extraordinary story. So, Let me take you from Thomas Street, to Macedonia. Macedonia today is modern day:

- Greece
- Bulgaria
- Albania
- Serbia
- and Kosovo.

Paul would visit this region on his 3rd missionary journey. He made stops in the first Christian churches in this region, they included the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Now these churches had 2 major problems. First, they were the poorest of the poor. They had nothing. But they were poorer than that. Out of their Love for what Jesus did for them on that cross, they took a stand for Jesus. Not only did they refuse to worship other gods, they fought against those who said all gods led to heaven. In fact, they actively preached the exclusivity of Jesus to the worshipers of the false gods of Mithra, Astart, and Zeus. And there would be hell to pay by the Romans. Rome tries to stop these Macedonian churches from preaching Jesus by raiding the region, robbing it of its natural wealth, including minerals and timber. When that didn't stop the preaching, Rome resorted to torturing and killing these Christians. So, at the end of the day, the Macedonian Christians are suffering physical persecution and financial disaster because of their love for Jesus. Yet, here's what's crazy. All that suffering, all that persecution only INCREASED their love and their desire to give! Listen to this part of Chapter 8 again:

- In a severe test of affliction
 - Their abundance of joy
 - And their extreme poverty
 - overflowed
 - in a wealth of generosity
 - They gave beyond their means, of their own accord!

Out of their hearts desire to see others around the world fall in love with Jesus, they gave financially beyond their means specifically to a people they would never meet, 1,000 miles away in Jerusalem!

It's like these Macedonians knew what that Philadelphia Naval Captain, Uriah Levy knew. He was once asked how he could give so much to the Lord's work and still possess wealth. The Captain replied, "Oh, as I shovel it out, God shovels it in, and the Lord has a bigger shovel."

And it gets even better for the Macedonians. The Bible says the Macedonians beg Paul to take their money to be given to the churches in Jerusalem, again, a church a thousand miles away! Imagine for a minute the Bishop coming to St. Michael's and everyone with one voice begging to give money to the work of some church 1,000 miles away,

"Bishop we beg you,

- please let us give to people we've never seen and will never meet!"
- Take our money
- We will not take no for an answer!

Paul is clear, the Macedonians are giving out of their love for Jesus! There was no pressure on these Macedonians to give, no coercion. The Macedonians simply want those in Jerusalem to experience the forgiveness and freedom with Jesus now and into eternity, the same forgiveness and freedom they've experienced!

My friends, If we say we love, but don't give, is it really love? It was clear by their giving, that Jesus is their first love, how beautiful is that! As an aside, as we look at the violence in our country, could it be as a nation we have fallen out of love with our first love? Isn't that the chief reason for the violence? Life without Jesus, is violence.

My friends, two take-homes today:

First take home: Do you love this way today in your relationships? Out of the Love that Jesus has for you, are you giving yourself away? Are you forgiving the sins of others as you go? Or are you keeping it all in here? Men, out of love are you still giving your whole self to your wife?

- Are you still giving yourself in courtship?
- Are you giving full attention
- Full compassion and passion?
- Yes, are you still opening the car door for her?

And Are we loving Jesus this way?

WE CAN'T LOVE WITHOUT GIVING!

LOVE IS NOTHING UNLESS WE GIVE IT AWAY!

But second, as the collective people of St. Michael's Church, we together want to continue to be like the Macedonian Church! I praise God for the fact that right now, for every dollar given to St. Michael's Church, 10% of that is given away. On top of that, every January in our Global Impact Mission Conference we take up another offering, an offering that goes to ministry beyond St. Michael's. Again, out of our Macedonian-like desire that those in other parts of the Holy City, Hurting Coast, and Hungering World would fall in love with Jesus for eternity! We can't keep it to ourself!

So, from Macedonia let me personally take you 4,000 thousand miles East to India. On one of our recent mission trips there, Elizabeth and I and our St. Michael's Mission team spent a day in a town called Malda---200 miles north of Caclutta near Bangladesh. We were asked to minister in a safe house for girls, and as we walked in, there was a plaque. It nearly brought me to tears. Here we are, 8,000 miles from home and this is what the plaque says:

“St. Michael’s Safe House is a generous contribution from St. Michael’s Church, Charleston USA, inaugurated by Jean and Johnnie Corbett in the presence of Anglican Bishop Probal Dutta.”

Out of love for Jesus giving resources to a people we may never meet!

But let me take you much closer to home to a church about the same distance away that Jerusalem was to Macedonia. Our Jerusalem equivalent is Portland Maine, a thousand miles from here. We give to a church there because according to the Barna research think tank, Portland Maine is one of the top 2 of the least Christian Cities in America!!! This news led a man with a Macedonian Spirit from Sullivan’s Island, South Carolina to plant an Anglican Church in Portland just several months ago! The Rev. Dan Wolf out of love for Jesus, gave away his security, and with his wife and children moved up the coast to be a seed planter of faith!!! You will meet Dan in a minute.

Giving Out of love For Jesus.

My friends, let’s continue to beg to give! Loving Jesus and each other by giving ourselves, our hearts, time and resource. And this has me skipping up this aisle every Sunday!

Let us pray. Thank you Lord for exchanging your riches for our poverty as sinners in order that we might exchange our poverty for your riches! Therefore we love you, and we put our faith and trust in you. Out of that love, give us a burning desire to give our hearts, minds, time, and treasure to you, that a people who don’t yet know you would fall in love with you, just as we have. Amen.