

“Commissioned to Love and Serve”

1 Peter 4:8 & 10

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Peter said, **1 Peter 4 verse 8, “Above all maintain constant love for one another for love covers a multitude of sins.”**

The African Bishop, Desmond Tutu, was once asked why he became an Anglican rather than joining some other denomination. He replied that in the days of apartheid, when a black person and a white person met while walking on a footpath, the black person was expected to step into the gutter to allow the white person to pass and nod their head as a gesture of respect. “One day,” Tutu says, “when I was just a little boy, my mother and I were walking down the street when a tall white man, dressed in a black suit, came toward us. Before my mother and I could step off the sidewalk, as was expected of us, this man stepped off the sidewalk and, as my mother and I passed, tipped his hat in a gesture of respect to her! I was more than surprised at what had happened and I asked my mother, ‘Why did that white man do that?’ My mother explained, ‘He’s an Anglican priest. He’s a man of God, that’s why he did it.’ When she told me that he was an Anglican priest I decided there and then that I wanted to be an Anglican priest too. And what is more, I wanted to be a man of God.”

Above all maintain constant love for one another. Simple small things can have a profound, impact on a person, a country and the entire world. Yet what is simple is usually not easy. Put yourself in the shoes of the Anglican priest. I suspect all of us deep inside want to believe that we would also do as he did, that simple act of love giving an unknown family the right away and a nod of respect. However, in his shoes would you really have showed that simple act of love? Although it was the right thing to do, it was not at that time in South Africa the popular and expected thing to do. Likely the Anglican priest was mocked, threatened and even risked losing his pastorate for his simple act of love. Yet that one simple act of love grew and covered a multitude of sins. It inspired a boy to get his education and become a man of God. A man with a vision for a peaceful, democratic and just society without racial divisions. A man who won the Noble Peace Prize. A simple act of love with unimaginable power. That simple act of love played a role in ending Apartheid in South Africa. Meister Eckhart said, “Love can only be where there is equality.”

Kierkegaard reflecting on our scripture said, “It takes multifaceted love to find the many ways necessary to cover the multitude of sins of our world.” God has given each of us a unique gift to be discovered, nurtured, and shared with love creating an abundance of multifaceted love. The tragedy is some people do not believe they have a special gift to offer. Every person of every age and ability has a unique gift that is needed by the rest of us. Some people get discouraged and fail to nurture their gifts. Other people become distracted and do not make the time to share their gift. The more people who share their gifts the more complete our experience of God. Without everyone’s gifts being shared in harmonious love, we are like a team missing players or a vehicle not running on all cylinders or an assembly line missing parts. Peter said, **1 Peter 4:10 “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”**

Take some time today in reflective prayer. Think back over your life giving thanks to God for all the people who have shared their gifts with you. Thank God for all the opportunities you have had to share your gifts, to love and to serve. Next, prayerfully ask God, “What gifts do you want me to discover, nurture, and share?” Then, take time to listen. Consider how God has blessed you. What comes naturally to you? What gives you joy? Match this up with what is needed by your family, the church, and the world. Charles Kingsley said, “Have your tools ready and God will find you work.” Don’t wait until you can serve perfectly. Start loving where you are. God invites every person to be an active participant. All are equal, no exceptions!

Jesus has commissioned us to serve with love. God delights in loving through you and me. God delights in giving us special gifts and abilities, nurturing us and fanning our flame of love so that through our simple acts of love the earth and everyone in it is set right and united in vibrant harmony. Amen