

“What’s Love Got to Do With It?”  
Sermon: August 17, 2014  
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[Matthew 10]

Singer Tina Turner’s most successful single was “What’s Love Got to Do with it?” [1984]

*What's love got to do, got to do with it?*  
 *What's love but a second hand emotion?*  
 *What's love got to do, got to do with it?*  
*Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?*

Now you may ask, “*What’s that have to do with the sermon this morning?*”

Love. In the Bible, love is the one thing that God is never ambiguous about.

God’s ambiguity has received a lot of attention in our denomination in the last few months. Loud voices have spoken of God’s will as stated in the scriptures, along with God’s intentions and God’s purposes. Those who seem to have a direct line to God have stated that our denomination is “*laying hands on something holy.*” These same folks appear to have the answers to most issues: marriage equality, war, death and social programs – answers that we would all like to have.

It sometimes appears that the loudest voices proclaiming scripture are those with the narrowest views?

“*What’s love got to do with it?*” or any of life’s issues?

How **does** our scriptural tradition address them?

We can attest to the fact that it does speak to love, which is the foundation of our faith and supposedly the basis of our views affecting what in life matters.

For example, we hear talk about what things oppose Christian values or family values. But have you ever heard one of those loud voices declare that Jesus is a cause of the destruction of the family.

From today's passage in Matthew, "*For I have come to set a man against his father, □ and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*" {Matthew 10:35}

Or we could just skip that verse and go to verse 40. "*Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.*" This is the theme of hospitality - a central theme of scripture – both in the Old and New Testaments.

I'm not suggesting that we hop all around the Bible and chose verses that make us feel comfortable there; if we did that there might be a lot of verses left out.

Back to Jesus and the destruction of the family. Why would Jesus talk about the family that way? New Testament scholars believe that these verses reflect Matthew's own heartbreak at what was happening in his community.

Historically, one Semitic perspective view was that the "result" of an action was its "purpose." In other words Jesus' intent wasn't to split up families; that was just what happened.

Whatever the cause of Jesus' words they were more than likely encouraging to those who did leave their families to follow him.

There are times in scripture that Jesus' responses are a bit odd. He seems to have opposing viewpoints. But it does

appear that he was redefining the idea of family to something beyond blood, heredity and tradition. Jesus gathered the “outcast” together and called his disciples “children” and “little ones.”

There are those that proclaim that the Bible is filled with descriptions of “Christian [and/or family] values” suggesting that one could open up to any page in the Bible and find the answers.

Let’s look for some “values,” and we’ll start with the Old Testament.

**Story:** Abraham and his son Isaac both passed off their wives as their sisters to save their own skin. Passing off your wife as your sister just doesn’t seem like the type of thing that the patriarchs of Judaism should have been doing or advocating.

**Story:** Leah was pushed by her own father, Laban, to become an unloved and unwanted substitute in the marriage bed of her sister as a ploy to get Jacob to work longer for him.

**Story:** Israel’s greatest king, David, was married and so was Bathsheba when he took her for himself and then made sure her husband was killed in battle.

**Rated story:** The passionate man and woman in the Song of Songs are not married.

And yet, in these same Hebrew Scriptures is a **story** that is a beautiful portrait of love = in the story of the relationship between David and Jonathan. Love remembered in David’s moving lament when Jonathan was killed in battle, *“I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved*

*were you to me; your love to me was wonderful - passing the love of women."*

So it seems that one shouldn't look at these Biblical passages as models for modern marriage and relationships even though the gold standard of marriage vows comes from the **story** of the beautiful relationship between Ruth and Naomi.

But Ruth said, "*Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!*"

Let's look at the New Testament. What stories could we choose?

**Story:** Joseph loved Mary, but we know very little about their life, except the distress they felt when their preteen son [Jesus] did his thing.

**Story:** We know that Simon Peter was married only because Jesus healed his mother –in-law.

**Story:** Timothy, one of Paul's dearest friends had mixed parentage – Hebrew mother and Greek father. We do know that Paul praised Timothy's grandmother Eunice and mother Lois. [Maybe they raised him.]

**Story:** Jesus, the example of perfection, wasn't interested in being married. Today's reading demonstrates what looks like Jesus' devaluation of the bonds of husbands and wives, children and parents on the side of the Christian life.

It seems impossible to find what people call “*traditional family values*” all throughout the Bible. The Bible doesn’t seem to be like magazines at the check out counter that proclaim easy steps to obtain a healthy relationship or how to repair a broken one.

Where did you learn your family values? Many of us learned them from our families and the communities in which we grew up. But the feelings gained from those experiences may not be the same as Christian values based upon scriptural tradition.

If we claim authority from the Bible, we need to know what the Bible says and we need to know what it doesn’t say. Example: When Paul was struggling with the Corinthian church over matters of sexual morality, he said, “*Now concerning virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but give my opinion...*” Now that’s refreshing honesty.

Jesus said many different things about families, including his own. Some affirm our feelings and opinions and others challenge our assumptions and lead to uneasiness.

BUT there is a lot of scripture about the ***loving community*** – the ***inclusive*** community. As a matter of fact, the theme of much of the New Testament seems to be the “***beloved community,***” where those who are rejected by society find welcome.

God is definitely not ambiguous when it comes to creating an intentionally inclusive and diverse body in the church that embraces those who are hurt by the world. The words of Psalm 133:

***How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!***

***It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.***

***It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.***

What's love got to do with it? Everything.  
The message in the scriptures is clear: accept, include, love, be loved, listen and learn from each other.

There is no “*except this one or that one' on the cross.*” We are one. Whether we fit in with each other or not, we belong to each other.

I'd like to end with a poem written by Kenneth Dill.

"The Quilt of Life"

I'm but a thread of humankind  
With all humanity intertwined.  
Daily weaving reveals to me  
This quilt of life that's meant to be.  
Each thread different, yet spun the same  
The love of God we all may claim.  
With his gift of true free will  
I give my peace to spread goodwill.

Creating my life day by day,  
Entwined with others in every way.  
With each choice I must decide;  
Reveal myself, or veil and hide.

What's in my heart I'll try to teach  
Another soul that I might reach.  
When all I have I give to you  
My life will then be richer too.

One breath of life that we all share,  
It comes from God...is always there.  
From HIS LOVE I cannot part.  
This quilt of life has just one heart.

AMEN

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