

The Temporary Orphanage- Sermon Based on John 14:15-21
by David Hindman on Sunday, May 29, 2011

One of life's great mysteries is how love happens. When I was young I thought there was some magic formula you followed, or a pre-determined set of instructions you used, like when you connect the Blu-Ray player to the TV. Of course there is no magic formula and no set of instructions to follow. Even if there were they'd probably work about as well as the directions for connecting electronic equipment.

We fall in love in a million different ways. Lucky for you this isn't a million point sermon on love. But I do want to look at falling in love from two starting places.

Sometimes we're in love with someone and because we love them we want to understand them. Because we love them we increasingly get them. We try to see things from their point of view; we want to do what pleases them or brings joy to them; more and more we understand their interests and passions and way of being in the world. Because we love them we want to really know the things that make them who they are so we can grow in our love of them. We love them, and so more and more we get them.

But it can work the other way, too. Sometimes we get somebody and then we realize we have fallen in love with them. We start out as friends enjoying the

same things, with a similar sense of humor or sharing mutual hopes and dreams. But the two of us get it and get each other. Life begins as friends or co-workers or neighbors with much in common and we wake up one day realizing we have fallen in love.

The reality is that these things don't happen in sequence, like insert tab A into slot B; then fold side C to touch side D. Getting each other and loving each other are a dynamic reality that push and pull each other. We might see one side of the reality first or one aspect seems to have come first for us. But both dimensions are happening at the same time.

This week as I read these words of Jesus found in John's Gospel, I thought about that dynamic reality. In verse 15, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Loving Jesus leads to wanting to obey him, to learn his ways, to do what he asks, to get him. And in verse 21, Jesus says the same thing but in reverse order, "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me..." If we do what Jesus asks and follow his ways, as we do those things we will fall in love with him. Because we love Jesus, we want to get him more and more. And when we get him, we realize we have fallen in love with him, too. Both are totally true.

I know this is really dense, and I could use a chart. But sometimes doing particular things leads us to love, and sometimes love leads to us do particular

things. I think both are true. It's a closed system where both happen at the same time. We don't know when one ends and the other begins, or where one begins and the other ends.

When we love someone we learn special and specific ways to show them we care. This summer Dawne's offering a book study to our youth and others based on *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. Chapman says that each of us have particular ways we really get love. Some of us show love by giving or receiving gifts; others experience love through acts of kindness or service; for others touch is our love language. Love is real for some through quality time together; and for others words of affirmation are the love language we speak. Love become most real when we speak the love language of our beloved and show love to them in ways that are real to them. Of course some things speak love language to all of us. Paul writes in the New Testament, "Love is patient and kind; it is not envious or arrogant or boastful or rude. Love doesn't insist on its own way; it's not irritable or resentful; it finds no joy in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Where these happen love is present. When they're absent, no matter how much we say the word; love is nowhere to be found.

There are two ways to show we love Jesus, according to John's story. We love as Jesus loves. That's not emotional, feel good, romantic top 40 l-u-v love.

Jesus' love endures, and serves and sacrifices for the well-being of all. It's extravagant and costly and not just when it's easy or convenient. This love often is in the shape of a cross.

And we believe in Jesus. That's not an intellectual exercise like believing the world is round. Believing in Jesus is staking our life that he's telling the truth about life and God and what really matters. Believing in Jesus is getting Jesus and trusting that loving others and forgiving our enemies and serving the poor and stepping back from the frantic noise of the world to listen for the still small voice of eternity is the way to live. And when we live and love that way, the ways of Jesus are our ways. We're one with Christ and one with the God Jesus shows us in his life. There's such an intimate connection of love and trust that we enter into this incredible, dynamic and powerful life that's simply electrifying. We put our finger into *the* source of energy and power at the heart of the universe, so stand back and hold on.

Have you ever had an almost mystical experience of love? You're so at one with another that you might even say, "I don't know where you end and I begin." You're like peas in a pod; separate and yet one in mind and heart and soul and body. That's what Jesus promises here. Love's the lifeline joining our lives to Jesus and God and to each other. And as long as we are connected in that love line, we're one with Christ, one with each other, one in ministry to all the world.

We become one with the Father Christ says is his Father and ours. Love's the glue holding us together; it's the binding force of all creation making us whole and complete.

Jesus speaks these words the night before he goes to the cross. He knows his time's up. Soon he'll be gone from his friends. But even then, love leads him still to care for them. So he promises that he won't leave them orphaned, forlorn, bereft, alone. Jesus promises to send the Spirit of Truth who helps us see what's real and what's not. He promises the Paraclete: the Encourager, the Helper, our divine Stand-up Go-to Guy we can always count on. This promised Spirit reminds us of things we might almost forget and teaches how to live love now. And Jesus promises to come again soon. For John the 2nd coming of Jesus is not re-calculated for October 21 or at the end of history. Jesus has already come again Easter Day when he broke out of the tomb and came through locked doors saying to his friends, "Peace be with you." In that little while between Good Friday and Easter, Jesus' friends may have felt forgotten and wondered how they could go on. But that time is over. We are not orphaned or forgotten or abandoned; we don't have to feel forlorn. The risen Christ is with us to the end of time and beyond. And Christ comes in living power whenever and wherever we live in love and let Jesus' way become our ways. Christ lives! We live in him; the Spirit sustains us; the Father lives in us and loves us in a holy trinity of love and joy. The world doesn't

see or get Jesus and so it can't really love Jesus. It still thinks violence and getting even and grasping and getting more and power and status are the way to go. But we know better. We see and know that as we love and get Jesus more, the more we live, the more we love, the more we are at home in the heart of God, the more connected and complete we are. It's the way to go. And when we walk that path, Christ comes and spreads the fire of his life to us. We're not orphaned, but home at last, thanks be to God.