



Worship Service Theme: Love (Sunday near Valentine's Day)

Helpful Elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)
Nametags ("Hello, My Name Is...")



Prelude: O Worship the King

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. This week we celebrate Valentine's Day, named after one of the early Christian martyrs, St. Valentine. So today our theme is **love** – specifically, God's profound love for us.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Joyful, Joyful

First Reading: Isaiah 62:2-5 (NIV)

² ...You will be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.

³ You will be a crown of splendor in the hand of the Lord,
a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

⁴ No longer will they call you Deserter ,
or name your land Desolate.

But you will be called Hephzibah [which means “the Lord’s delight”],
and your land Beulah [which means “married”];
for the Lord will take delight in you,
and your land will be married.

⁵ As a young man marries a young woman,
so will your Builder marry you;
as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,
so will your God rejoice over you.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me

Oh, How I love Jesus

Second reading: From St. Paul's letter to the Roman church (Romans 8:35-39):

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

I Love to Tell the Story

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Interactive Homily: Let's talk a little more about love.¹

- Have you ever had or given someone a “pet name”? For example, what did your mom or dad call you when you were little? What nicknames did you have for your kids or pets?
 - Names like honey, sweetie, pumpkin, lambie ...
- Why do we give people or pets these special names?
 - Terms of endearment, closeness, special status, intimacy.
- Names have significance and meaning for our identity, don't they? But sometimes, we carry around names that we should get rid of. What kinds of identity labels are unhelpful and unkind to ourselves?
 - “I'm lazy, I'm not smart, I'm lonely, I'm alone ...”
- In the passage from Isaiah, God tells his people that he gives them a new name:
 - “You shall be a crown of beauty, a royal diadem...”
 - The crown the Lord delights in wearing is his people – YOU!
 - Hephzibah means “the Lord's delight”
 - Beulah means “married to the Lord”
- When you hear the words “the Lord's delight” and “married,” what event comes to mind?
 - A wedding! These names are about love.

¹ With gratitude to Laurie Niewoehner, Grace Commons Church: <https://youtu.be/XtGJn-1KFzI>

- The Bible uses the image of a bridegroom to represent God: “As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5).
- Why do people get married? What does a marriage signify?
 - Deep love and a desire to commit forever; someone who wants to be with you for the rest of their life.
 - This is the love God has for you! God delights in you, deeply and passionately.
- What are some of the vows made in a marriage ceremony?
 - Love, honor, cherish, serve ... how well do we keep these?
 - Because we’re human, these all get broken at some time during life.
 - But unlike people, God NEVER breaks his vows. God is NEVER impatient, NEVER leaves you, NEVER angry out of turn, NEVER turning the cold shoulder.
 - Not even death can separate us from God’s love. It’s a vow for all of us, for all eternity – whether you are married, single, widowed, unhappy, happy, confused, peaceful.
- What can make it hard to consistently believe and feel this extravagant love of God?
 - Trials and hardships make us question: “Where is God?”
- Think about someone you feel totally safe with. What do you do in hard times?
 - You seek out their company and comfort.
 - In hard times, God asks us to come closer. When we surrender to God, he shows the path forward, even as we walk through “the valley of the shadow of death.”
 - God is close to the brokenhearted and wants us to cling to him.
- On your nametag, write one of these, and then put it somewhere you’ll see it every day:
 - The Lord’s Delight
 - Married to the Lord
 - One God Loves
- When you see your nametag, take one minute to receive the love of God. See how it impacts your day.

Let us pray together, that our hearts would be open to God's love, and that we would live in our name, that we are the Lord's delight.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

He's Got the Whole World

Blessed Assurance

Third Reading: Quotes on Love

To love someone deeply gives you strength. Being loved by someone deeply gives you courage. – Lao Tse, ancient Chinese philosopher

A life with love will have some thorns, but a life without love will have no roses. – Anonymous

Love is such a powerful force. It's there for everyone to embrace – that kind of unconditional love for all of humankind. That's the kind of love that impels people to go into the community and try to change conditions for others, to take risks for what they believe in. –Civil rights activist Coretta Scott King

We are so passionately loved by God and are often oblivious to it. We are like people with the winning lottery ticket in our pocket and we don't know it, so we never cash it in. –Teacher and prayer minister Laurie Niewoehner

To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up. –comic poet Ogden Nash

Hymns:

Amazing Grace

Standing on the Promises

Fourth Reading: Short stories about love²

A woman recently told this story: “Today, I got a phone call from my daughter’s kindergarten teacher. She asked me why I wasn’t providing lunch for my daughter over the past few days, but of course I had been making lunches every day. Confused, I hung up the phone and asked my daughter what she was doing with her lunches. My daughter said, ‘My friend Katie’s mom is in the hospital and hasn’t been able to make any meals for Katie, the last week, so I gave a few of my lunches to Katie.’”

A man told this story: “When I was younger, one day my dad handed me a bottle of Windex and a roll of paper towels as we got in the car. He turned to me and said, ‘I just talked to your mom while she was on her lunch break. She mentioned her windshield got covered in bugs on the drive to work. Since we’re going to drive right by her work anyway, I figured we’d clean them off for her. It’s the little things, kiddo, that keep love going.’”

A young lady told this story: “Yesterday was my little sister’s fourteenth birthday. She has a brain disease called Down syndrome, and she doesn’t have many friends. My boyfriend picked me up for dinner with flowers, but said the flowers weren’t for me. Instead, he came inside and handed the flowers to my sister for her birthday. She was so excited! My boyfriend then took both of us out to dinner to celebrate.”

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In

My Jesus, I Love Thee

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

² selections from <http://www.marcandangel.com/2013/02/13/60-short-love-stories-to-cheer-you-up/>

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise

Postlude: My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Extra Material:

Lamentations 3:22-26

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;

 his mercies never come to an end;

²³they are new every morning;

 great is your faithfulness.

²⁴“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,

 “therefore I will hope in him.”

²⁵The Lord is good to those who wait for him,

 to the soul who seeks him.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; love is not arrogant ⁵or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never ends.