



First Presbyterian

ROME

Embracing Agape

I. Scripture Lesson

Romans 12:9-13 (ESV)

⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

II. Introduction

“I really called to tell you some incredible news. My sister, Debi, was completely blown away by your relationship. This past week several times she would ask me if you guys are for real and finally she asked me what made the difference in your marriage. What do you have that makes you love each other like that? I saw my opportunity to tell her that it’s Jesus that makes the difference in your lives and I shared the gospel with her and she has trusted Christ!” That happened more than 20 years ago, but some variation of that story has happened many times in our 34-year marriage. In fact, without question, our relationship is the greatest evangelism tool we have. On a beach, at a restaurant, on a plane, in a mall, it just happens. People notice that we are in love, that we cherish and adore one another and they’ll start a conversation about it. Eventually they get to the question: “What is your secret?”

- Herschel York, *Is Your Marriage a Picture of the Gospel*

III. Big Idea

The centrality of love in the Christian life arises out of the Gospel and sets the stage for interactions amongst believers.

- The centrality of love
- The nature of love
- The posture of love

IV. Centrality of Love

“Love for others, singled out by Christ himself as the essence of OT law and the central demand of the New Covenant, quickly became enshrined as the foundational and characteristic ethical norm of Christianity.”

- Douglas Moo

“It is clear from the emphasis Paul gives to love throughout his writings that he saw it as particularly important....love was the basis of their salvation as well as in the forefront of the life they were expected to live.”

- Leon Morris

V. Nature of Love

“Paul conceives of the church as a family that is even closer than one’s biological family, for all are united to Christ as brothers and sisters. Thus warm affection should be course among the members of the body.”

- T. Schreiner

“Paul is warning about making our love a mere pretense, an outward display or emotion that does not conform to the nature of the God who is love and who has loved us.”

- Douglas Moo

VI. Posture of Love

The love of God is greater far,
Than tongue or pen can ever tell.
Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

- Frederick Lehman

VII. Conclusion

“For it is disgraceful that when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galileans [Christians] support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us. Teach those of the Hellenic faith to contribute to public service of this sort.”

- Julian, Roman Emperor 360 A.D.