

**Love One Another, it is as easy and as difficult as that**

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 –John 13:31-35 & Rev 21:1-6)*

1

# **Love One Another, it is as easy and as difficult as that**

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 –John 13:31-35 & Rev 21:1-6)*

Love one another and you will be happy. It's as simple and as difficult as that, so says Michael Leunig.

When I think about this quote and Jesus commandment to love one another I immediately think about two people, two people who were vastly different to each other but who both taught me about love.

Robyn Ann, was my best friend as a teenager. We did everything together, sadly she died when she was 26. Robyn had a quiet and gentle way about her. She was genuinely interested in people and had this rare ability to befriend people from all walks of life. Once in her presence you knew you were loved and accepted. She would learn about the things that made you tick and be able to talk to you about them. She played tennis for years with my family even though it wasn't really her thing, she listened to my monologues about how I would change the world, she would listen to my brother's awful music. She had no idea of the influence she had on people's lives, evidenced by the numbers of people of all ages and walks of life who attended her funeral. I am sure you know someone like that – who loves unconditionally and has your best interest at heart.

The second person I think about is a man called Theo. Theo, from the Greek word for God. Theo has struggled through life, he has schizophrenia and other mental health issues, lives in a rooming house and often looks dishevelled, however there is something God like about Theo. He remembers all about you, the other week when I had a Sunday off, I attended an infant dedication at my old church. When I arrived the church was pretty full, I had not been there for a few years and as I looked around, I didn't see many people that I recognised, so I tentatively made my way to a seat. As I made my way down the aisle, at the top of his voice, Theo, says 'OH Cheryl!!', in that instant I knew I was remembered, I knew I was loved and as I sat behind him, he asked me many questions, told me what was happening with him as if it was yesterday I had last seen him. At the end of the service, he got up and did what he had been doing for years, stood beside the minister and as the blessing was pronounced, he raised his hands as a sign of that blessing, and once again I felt truly blessed. I am sure you have a Theo in your life.

This is the kind of love of which Jesus speaks and lived. A love that accepts and is non-judgemental. A love that is genuinely interested in your story. A love that serves the needs of others. A love that stands up for you and for justice. A love that is ethical and never exploits or manipulates. A love that is compassionate and inclusive. A love that remembers. A love that is courageous enough to tell you some hard truths. A love that is costly and self-giving. A love that does more than just tolerate, a love that has nothing to do with romance. A love that has its origin in God, is revealed in Jesus and sustained by the Spirit.

This kind of love shows who we belong to, who we follow, that we are indeed disciples, followers, students of Jesus. A love that is both easy and difficult. A love that will create and reveal a new heaven and earth as envisioned in the book of Revelation.

***Love One Another, it is as easy and as difficult as that***

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 –John 13:31-35 & Rev 21:1-6)*

2

My friend Robyn, I suspect got sick of me telling her about the problems of the world (back in the 70's and 80's) and how the politicians were not up to it and what needed to happen. One day she said to me – 'Well, I am going to give you 3 months to make a difference to this world'. Forty years later I am still working on it, it only took her short life of twenty-six years to change the world and the world of all the people she encountered.

God is love, we are his people, we are the ones living out his mission in this world. By our love we show ourselves to be Jesus's disciples and in so doing we change the world to a place where there is justice, acceptance, where tears are wiped away, where everyone knows just how unique and irreplaceable they truly are. It's as simple and as difficult as that.

May you all know such acceptance, such understanding, such consolation, such challenge and may you all practice such as well.

We are the community of Jesus' disciples here in this part of Footscray, so let us love one another and those beyond these walls, so all will know our true identity.

Jesus says, love one another as I have loved you. Let's live it. Amen.