

Guess How Much I Love You

Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church for an Infant Dedication - June 11th, 2023

To the moon and back, that's how much I love you, says Big Nutbrown Bear to Little Nutbrown Bear. You can't get much greater love than that, it is pretty extensive.

There is something delightful about this book, but it also illustrates a great truth. Good parenting is about love.

Love that

- Accepts a child for who they are, not who we want them to be
- Encourages them in their endeavours
- Supports them in their darker days
- Laughs with them
- Forgives them when that is needed
- Has the courage to tell them hard truths
- Engenders in them a desire to explore and discover the world around them
- Teaches them about fairness, so they will treat others fairly
- That sets them free to follow their own path
- Shows them patience, in order that they might practice such
- Allows them to teach us and share their insights
- Helps them care for others
- Practices generosity in order that they too will be generous
- Understands
- Never exploits or manipulates
- Puts their interest first, so they will do the same to others they will meet
- Sets examples of kindness, of acceptance, of reconciliation

This kind of love has its origin in God. God is love. God loves us into being and sustains us. The kind of love that accepts us no matter what. The kind of love that forgives us. The kind of love that comforts us in our times of sorrow. The kind of love that shares our joys. This is the kind of love we are all called to emulate. Jesus calls us to love one another. Paul reminds us in his letter to Corinthians of what love looks like –

'Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.' (1 Cor 13:4-7)

Now we usually read this passage at weddings and think it relates to romantic love but that is not the context to which Paul is writing. He is writing to a community with a bit of 'in fighting' going on and is reminding them of how they should be behaving, of how they should be connecting to each other.

Michael Leunig, an Australian cartoonist, echoes that call, but reminds us that whilst life is about loving one another, it is both easy and difficult.

So today parents, grandparents, godparents and all of us gathered here today, we are called to love to the moon and back. To live lives of love. Today we have promised to show that kind of love to 'N' as she grows into the woman she will become.

We have gathered today to give thanks for her and all she brings to our lives, indeed to give thanks for all the little people who are part of our lives. We have sought God's blessing on her and her life. We have asked for guidance to help us guide her. We have been reminded that our job is to love her and each other to the moon and back.

So let us love to the moon and back, it is as easy and as difficult as that. Amen.