

Loving with everything you've got

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at FBC, November 3rd, 2024, Mark 10:14-16 & 12:28-34)

Children all need love.

Love that accepts the child for who they are.

Love that encourages them in their endeavours.

Love that cares and supports them when the chips are down.

Love that engenders a sense of discovery – that with them sees dams and bridges to build in muddy puddles, not muddy shoes that will dirty the carpet, love that sees the dandelions as a bunch of flowers and blowy light fluff in which to make a wish and not just some weeds, love that thinks the wind can help you fly when you put your arms out and not just something that messes with your hair.

Love that is patient, caring and forgiving.

Love that listens and understands.

Love that is fair.

Love that is freeing.

Love that shares the laughs, the joys and the sorrows.

Love that is generous and compassionate.

Love that doesn't control, manipulate or exploit.

Our readings today are all about love. The book, 'Guess How Much I Love You' reminds us of how extensive love can be – all the way to the moon and back. The poem which we will read shortly, 'Children learn what they live' reminds us of how we should treat children, how we should love children, in order, to help them become all that they can be, to help them reach their full potential. Jesus welcomes the children, children that the disciples would rather see and not hear, and then goes one step further and tells them that if you want to be part of the kingdom, you need to adopt some of their traits – acceptance, warmth, curiosity and eagerness.

In our reading from Mark, we find the two greatest commandments and both of them are centered around love. Centered around loving with all that you have, with your whole being. Loving with all you heart, soul, mind and strength. Loving God like that, and then the second commandment is loving your neighbour just like that. This is what has become known as the golden rule.

It seems to me that these two commandments are deeply connected. One is an outworking of the other. Loving God with our whole being will always have a practical outworking. When we love God, we have no option but to follow Jesus and in following Jesus the only way is to love. Loving our neighbour is the truest expression of our faith. Love will always find a way through, love will always go beyond the letter of the law.

And what does this love look like? It is enjoying each other's company like Little and Big Nutbrown Bears. It is never ending like their love. It is extensive. It takes our heart, soul, mind and strength. It is compassionate. It is empathetic. It is forgiving and reconciling.

It is accepting. It is putting others before ourselves. Its exactly the kind of love that God has poured out onto his creation.

So, parents, big sister, grandparents, godparents and all of us gathered here today, we are called to live lives of love, to love to the moon and back. Today we will promise to show that kind of love to 'C' so he can grow into the man he will become.

We will give thanks for him and all he brings to our lives. We will ask God's blessing on him and his life. We will ask for guidance to guide him.

Love God with every inch of your being and in turn love your neighbour as yourself. As Michael Leunig says 'Love one another and you will be happy. It's as simple and as difficult as that'.