September 6th, 2020

Springfield Presbyterian Church

I’m Not Even Sure Anymore What Season We Are In.

The 180th Day of March

**Love.**

I. To Show Up

Clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6medInpUcmQ>

Admittedly, my sermon title this morning was inspired by this man’s awesome shirt. But today’s sermon is also inspired by his dedication to love – to encourage people to show up for themselves and show up for others. In these times, it’s a message we need to hear on repeat and how we show up in love for each other has changed in these times. I am incredibly proud of Springfield’s faithfulness to follow the path of love, even in these uncertain times. We’ve seen prayer shawls delivered, kind notes in mailboxes, laughter and tears on phone calls, emails checking in, and prayers shared on the zoom virtual world. We have shown up in love.

But the call is urgent, both in Paul’s letter to the Romans and today – we live in challenging times and right now, we need to continue to show up. There is no if, when, later, maybe, I guess – the command is clear. All of the commandments, all of the parables, all of the Scripture that we read and hear and meditate on can all be summed up in one world: love. All that Jesus came to do, to live and work in this world and then to ultimately die on a cross for our salvation – what else is that, but love alone?

One of the hard questions that we can wrestle with, especially in these season of COVID-19, racial tensions, and an upcoming election is...how do we love? The guy on the video is absolutely right – we need to show up, even in the smallest of ways – but it is a lot easier to be said than lived out.

I am no exception – I would love if the pastorate gave me a fast pass to Jesus and the strength to be saintly. The good news and the bad news is – I’m human. While I try to live out a life of faithfulness, I’m still stymied by the call to love every day.

II. How do I show up?

One of the questions that I’ve been struggling with lately is how do I love someone or show love when our values are different. I do not have the answer. Sure, I could love someone if they liked apple pie and I liked pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving time – right? But right here my struggle wades deeper and deeper. How do I show up in love in polarizing times – when we follow different candidates for Presidency, when we disagree on the best approach for our communities around COVID-19, or when we have the agonizing discussion between ‘black lives matter, all lives matter, blue lives matter’? Even as I say these topics out loud, I feel a deep and weary sigh in my soul – because to love right now can be hard.

The only way I’ve found to handle these difficult topics and the challenge of love is coming back to Scripture again and again. What I realize is that Jesus never said I had to agree with neighbour, or share similar values, or even really like my neighbour – because to like and to love is different. As an adjective, to like someone or something is to align with them, but to love them is a different call entirely.

If we move to another letter of Paul’s, his first letter to the Corinthians, he defines love in a way that we’ve heard on repeat: Love is patient and kind, it is not envious or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth...for love never ends.” Even when I do not agree with someone, I can still show patience, and kindness, I can be humble and still affirm my own values. And on the days where that call is too much, I can go inside, lean into prayer, and ask for the Spirit’s guidance. Maybe on those tough days, we need a tea break, or a nap – remember, even Jesus took naps! – and we aren’t going to hit the mark every day.

The point is to try – God never holds us as perfect beings, but just as we share in our confession and affirmation, that every day and every week, we need to ask for forgiveness and accept the forgiveness that has been so freely offered to us. The point was never to be perfect, but to try and show up – for yourself, for others – and to love when it is easy and when it is hard. So may you go from this place this afternoon and show up, may the Spirit guide you in love, to be a sign of love and hope wherever you go and may others show up in love for you. May you be blessed and be a blessing this day and always. Amen.