

Why Did Jesus Come? (4) To Demonstrate the Meaning of Love.

Matthew 22:34-40; John 15:9-14; Philippians 2:5-15

Today we lit the last of our four Advent candles. These are the candles on the outer ring of the wreath. Together they help us remember why Jesus came on that first Christmas and help us to refocus our lives to reflect the assured Hope, spiritual Peace, everlasting Joy and godly Love that help us live in expectation of the Second Coming or Advent of Christ. But, once more let us ask, why did Jesus come?

Jesus gives us the answer in John 15:9-14 NKJ, ⁹ “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

¹¹ “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full. ¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

Jesus’ life was one great expression of the two greatest commandments. He restated them in Matthew 22:34-40, ³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶“Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.* ’ ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second *is* like it: *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

The love of which Jesus speaks is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. So, we can only express it in obedience to His commandment when the Holy Spirit dwells within us. As we learned last Sunday the Holy Spirit comes and makes His home within us only when we believe in Jesus, the Son of God. This love is an expression of the very nature of God. We can define it with words all day and still not understand it so let me tell you a true story that better defines that love.

Ernest Gordon’s tells a true account of life in a World War II Japanese prison camp, in his book, Through the Valley of the Kwai. His story beyond anything I have ever read is an actual, living example of the love Jesus brought us. Angus McGillivray, a Scot, had such love that his life transformed a whole POW camp. The camp in which Angus was a prisoner was filled with Americans, Australians, and Britons. Literally these are the prisoners who had helped build the infamous *Bridge over the River Kwai*. You may remember the movie by that name. In that camp survival of the fittest was the rule. A dog-eat-dog mentality had set in. Prisoners would steal from each other and cheat each other. The men slept on their packs to preserve the little they had and yet the packs would be stolen from under their heads. The law of the jungle prevailed. This all changed with the news that Angus McGillivray had died. The news of his death spread throughout the camp like wildfire. Rumors spread. No one could believe that the big, strong Scot had succumbed. Everyone knew him and he was considered the least likely to die. It was the reason he died that got their attention and began the change.

It seems that the Scottish Argylls, as the Scottish soldiers were known, took their buddy system very seriously. They called their buddy, their “mucker.” It was up to each one to make sure their “mucker” survived. But, as Angus’s mucker, lay dying, everyone had given up on him, except for Angus.

Angus made up his mind that his buddy would not die. His mucker’s blanket was stolen. So Angus gave him his own blanket. He told his mucker that he had “just come across an extra one.”

At mealtime, Angus would give his rations to his friend. Then he would stand over his mucker and force him to eat the sparse rations. He told his mucker that he was able to get “extra food.” Angus did anything and everything to make sure that his mucker got whatever he needed to recover.

Slowly, Angus's mucker began to recover. But, finally, Angus himself collapsed, and died. The camp doctors discovered that Angus had died of starvation and exhaustion. He had given his mucker his own food and shelter. Angus McGillivray had given everything he had—even his life so that his mucker could live. The realization of Angus' acts of love and unselfishness had a startling impact. People remembered the words of Jesus, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12).

As word spread and as the soldiers realized the reason for Angus McGillivray's death, the attitude of the camp began to change. Suddenly, everyone focused on their buddies, their friends, and humanity. The focus became living beyond survival, of giving oneself away. They pooled their talents—one was a violin maker, another an orchestra leader, another a cabinet maker, another a professor. Soon the camp had an orchestra with homemade instruments. A church, called the "Church Without Walls" was formed and became so powerful, so compelling, that even the Japanese guards attended. A university was formed, then a hospital, and a library system. The whole camp was transformed by the depth of love that spread from man to man. It all happened because Angus McGillivray gave all he had for his mucker. Many survived the rigors of that camp only because Angus' loved his friend so much that he laid down his life for him. This is a true and awesome illustration of the potential unleashed when one person actually loves enough to give it all away.¹

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We are to exhibit the attitude of Christ as Paul reminds us in Philippians 2:5-15

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

This mindset brought Christ to planet Earth where He gave everything for you and me. His death changed the world. And as Angus McGillivray changed the POW camp you and I can, with the mindset of Christ and by having faith in Him, change our world today. Research statistics are showing that while there are certain faith hotspots in America, in general the Christian Church is rapidly in decline. Basically we are reverting to a pagan society much like that of the New Testament Church. Yet large part American Churches today are expecting to fill their churches and bring people to faith by having them come to the church as we did in the 1950's. We find ourselves in a position where Churches are, in principal, working in a survival of the fittest mode similar to that found in the POW Camps in the Valley of the Kwai. This same research shows that people who are coming out of modern paganism to embrace Christ are coming from actions of people beyond Church walls. Right now, the First Presbyterian Church of Boone is enjoying a new building

and a period of growth with around fifteen new families seeking a new spiritual experience through our congregation. So, where does this position our congregation as we move into the future?

Friends, take a hard, realistic look at the large numbers of people right in our general community who are dying spiritually. Look at the new paganism among the University students. Few of them will ever come into this facility. Over the long haul our congregation will not make a difference in this community or in the world at large until we adopt the sacrificial love of Angus McGillivray. His was the attitude of love demonstrated by Jesus. We may never agree on every jot and tittle in Scripture, as important as the Bible is to us all. But we can individually, as part of a Sunday School Class, or group do as Angus did. Demonstrate the love of Christ by giving your all to someone else. Jesus will do all the rest. Your sacrifice will turn the world upside down. In the end it is the only expression of love that will mean a thing. Go, choose your mucker and make sure he or she lives!

ⁱ Holy Sweat, Tim Hansel, 1987, Word Books Publisher, pp. 146-147

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