



The Heart of the Matter

"Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number..." -- Acts 2

The life and death of Jesus had one strong message that was both overt and inherent: love one another. The heart of the matter was love. Ziggy Marley sings, "Love is my religion... with you I share the gift, the gift we now know." Time and again we hear Jesus offer the disciples a post-resurrection message of empowerment to give to the world what he had given to them. This Easter Season we will encourage one another to truly live out the heart of the matter.

LOVE IS MY RELIGION | EASTER | 4/16/17

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merry-makers." -- Jeremiah 31: 3-4

"Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples." -- Matthew 28: 7-8

After the events of Holy Week, the disciples are devastated. They are in the midst of full-blown grief and disbelief. Into the heart of that grief came a stunning revelation—life had overcome death. Love had won out over violence. God’s faithfulness would build them up once again—will bind them together. Is this possible in our lives? Today’s worship will say, “Yes, it can! Come and see! Live and Love! This is the heart of the matter!”

WITH GLAD HEARTS | 4/23/17

“When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’”

-- John 20:19

To live “as Easter people” is to live knowing that death is not the final word. What would we do differently if we really believed that we are loved beyond all endings? That there was nothing to fear? Today we imagine Jesus at our “right hand,” counseling us throughout our days, “peace be with you.”

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART | 4/30/17

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” -- Luke 24: 30-32

Jesus’ table ministry was a preeminent way that he showed and shared a depth of love unseen in his time. He ate and spent time with those considered unworthy of his attention. Even in his post-resurrection appearances, it was in the breaking of bread that he was “recognized.” As we gather around his Table this day, we remember that, at the heart, his message was unconditional love.

HEARTS OVERFLOWING | 5/7/17

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” --Acts 2:46

“The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He

calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." -- John 10:1-10

Jesus used the metaphor of a shepherd several times in his ministry. In this passage, the sheep know the shepherd's voice and they follow because this Shepherd offers abundant life. What does a loving Christian community look like? What would it take to live with "glad and generous hearts?"

NO TROUBLE IN MY HEART | 5/14/17

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" -- John 14: 1-2

Jesus himself cried out to God from the Hebrew scriptures that were his holy texts, "Into your hands I commit my spirit." He reminded his disciples, and he reminds us, to trust in God when our hearts are troubled. Steadfast love is what God shows and what we are called to offer each other.

KEPT IN OUR HEARTS | 5/21/17

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever... They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." -- John 14: 15-21

To "sanctify" something is to set it apart as holy and consecrated. The resurrected Jesus tells his disciples that the Spirit will be with them when he is gone. Holiness resides within tells his disciples that the Spirit will be with them when he is gone. Holiness resides within each one of us. It calls us to see that holiness in others. It calls us to do the right thing in the name of Love, even when the right thing isn't popular.

OPEN THE EYES OF MY HEART | 5/28/17

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you..." -- Eph 1:17

"You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what [Abba, God] promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." --Luke 24: 48-49

The story of the last time the disciples saw Jesus is a story of blessing. Jesus says that as witnesses to his presence and resurrection, they too will be filled with power to carry on his ministry, to be his hands and feet in the world. To see the world through the eyes of Jesus is to see through the eyes of love.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER | PENTECOST | 6/4/17

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability... 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon those bound, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy...'" -- Acts 2:4, 17-18

"On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" --John 7:37-38

Throughout this season, we have proclaimed that love is that which binds us (the root of "religion") to God, to Jesus, to each other. Love IS our religion. On the day of Pentecost, the church received the power of the Holy Spirit to let this message flow out to all. The power of this message is ever-so important to spread in the world today. Let us be a community of messengers letting living truth flow from our hearts.