

## Daily Devotional Guide

**Monday** – Read Luke 24:13-18. We never know when Jesus will show up in our lives. As Cleopas and the other man headed to Emmaus, they had no idea Jesus would join them. Of course, in the beginning they did not know that it was Jesus. I wonder how often Jesus shows up in our lives and we are never aware of it. It could be that the stranger asking for help or that thought of inspiration or the unexplainable sense of peace is Jesus in our midst. We never know.

**Tuesday** – Read Luke 24:19-26. When Cleopas and the other man shared with this mysterious stranger the events about Jesus, Jesus sensed they were sharing with a sense of doubt. He said they were “slow of heart” to believe. Little did they know that they were in the very presence of the risen Lord. This is just like Jesus – to show up in moments of doubt. When you doubt, have no fear. Jesus can help you believe again. Give your fears and doubts to Jesus, and he will help you believe.

**Wednesday** – Read Luke 24:27. Can you imagine Jesus walking along with you and interpreting the scriptures for you? Wow! What a moment this must have been for Cleopas and his friend. This side of heaven we cannot see Jesus, but we can experience his presence with us. He is also there to help us understand the Bible. When we approach Bible study with an attitude of belief and prayer, Jesus comes alongside of us and helps us understand.

**Thursday** – Read Luke 24:28-31. Cleopas and his friend did not want Jesus to leave them. Can you blame them? How wonderful it must have been to walk and talk with Jesus on the road. Of course, they still did not know it was Jesus. They just knew they enjoyed his company. But Luke shows us in these verses that their eyes were opened to Jesus when he “broke bread” with them. In other words, they saw Jesus in light of the Eucharist and its reflection of Jesus’ body being broken for us. We cannot fully understand Jesus without experiencing his sacrificial love for us.

**Friday** – Read Luke 24:32-35. You have to appreciate how Cleopas and his friend expressed their passion for being with Jesus – “our hearts were burning within us.” When was the last time your heart was burning within you over the love of Jesus? Has your heart ever burned for Jesus? Draw close to Jesus and he will draw close to you. Be careful though. Your heart just might burn and you will never be the same.



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## Love Wins

Sunday, May 8, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: John 13: 31-35

Once upon a time there was a king who decided to set aside a special day to honor the greatest person in his kingdom. When the big day arrived, there was a large gathering in the palace courtyard. Four finalists were brought to the king, and from these four, the king would select the winner.

The first finalist presented was a wealthy philanthropist. The king was told that this man deserved the award because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given so much of his wealth to the poor and needy.

The second finalist was a beloved physician. The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the award because he had taken care of many sick people over the years.

The third finalist was a distinguished judge. The king was told that the judge was worthy of the honor because he was noted for his wisdom, fairness, and brilliant decisions.

The fourth finalist presented was an elderly woman. Everyone was quite surprised to see her there. She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honored as the greatest person in the kingdom. She was very humble and modest. What chance could she possibly have, when compared to the other three, who had accomplished so much? Yet, there was something about the way she looked. There was love in her face and understanding in her eyes.

The king was surprised and very intrigued. When he asked who she was, the answer came:

"You see the philanthropist, the doctor, and the judge? Well, she was their teacher!"

The woman had no wealth, no powerful position, and no authority, but she had unselfishly given her life to produce great people. There is nothing more powerful or more Christ-like than sacrificial love (story by Brett Blair in “The Road to Emmaus”).

I believe this is an appropriate story to share on Mother’s Day for a mother’s love is just like that of the teacher. Behind many great people are self-giving mothers. Loving mothers produce great people. There is nothing more Christ-like than the sacrificial love of a mother.

Dr. Tony Campolo is one of my favorite preachers. For most of his career, he has spent much of his time traveling around the world speaking to huge crowds.

Early on in their marriage, Tony’s wife, Peggy, chose to stay home and raise their two children, Bart and Lisa. On those rare occasions when Peggy did travel with Tony, she found herself engaged in conversations with some of the most accomplished, impressive, influential, sophisticated people in the world.

One particular time Peggy told Tony that sometimes as she talks with these powerful people she finds herself feeling intimidated and sometimes even questioning her own self-worth. Tony said to her: "Well, honey, why don't you come up with something you could say when you meet people that will let them know that you strongly value

what you do and you feel that it is dramatically, urgent and crucial and important.”

Soon after that, Tony and Peggy Campolo were at a party and they were visiting with a lady. The lady asked Peggy in a condescending tone, "Well, my dear, what do you do?" Tony Campolo heard his wife say:

"I am nurturing two Homo Sapiens into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition in order that they might become instruments for the transformation of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia God envisioned from the beginning of time." And the other woman said: "O, my, I'm just a lawyer!" (from "A Mother's Love" by James Moore)

I like that story because it reminds us that there are a lot of significant jobs in the world today but not one of them are more important than the job of being a mother. Think about it. Who has a better opportunity to make a difference to young lives than a mother?

Today, we celebrate Mother's Day. In honor of Mother's Day, I would like to share something with you I came across. It's called "Somebody Said" and it has these words:

*Somebody said it takes about six weeks to get back to normal after you've had a baby...*

*Somebody doesn't know that once you're a mother, "Normal," is history.*

*Somebody said you learn how to be a mother by instinct...*

*Somebody never took a three-year-old shopping.*

*Somebody said being a mother is boring...*

*Somebody never rode in a car driven by a teenager with a driver's permit.*

*Somebody said you don't need an education to be a mother...*

*Somebody never helped a fourth grader with her math.*

*Somebody said you can't love the fifth child as much as you love the first...*

*Somebody doesn't have five children.*

*Somebody said the hardest part of being a mother is labor and delivery...*

*Somebody never watched her "baby" get on the bus for the first day of kindergarten or on a plane headed for military "boot camp."*

*Somebody said your mother knows you love her, so you don't need to tell her...*

*Somebody isn't a mother.* (author unknown, quoted by Moore).

There is nothing quite like the love of a mother. There is nothing stronger, nothing greater, than the love of a mother and the love of mother figures in our lives.

On this Mother's Day I am grateful for my mother. She taught me so many things. One of the greatest things she taught me was to never hold back from expressing my love and appreciation to others. I grew up in a very expressive and loving home. Our family never held back from expressing our love to those we cared about. So, I grew up believing that everyone did this. However, when I became an adult I found out that the environment I grew up in was more the exception than the rule.

I still have a hard time understanding why people find it so difficult to express their love and appreciation to others. It takes hardly any effort at all, and it makes such a huge difference. If more people realized the power of expressed love, more people would do it.

Reverend James Moore recalls visiting a woman who was dying in a local hospital. She was in her mid-80's. Her son flew in to be with her. Moore was there when he arrived and entered the room. He walked over to the bedside of his dying mother, leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. He was so moved by her weak and vulnerable condition that he said to her: "Mom, you have been such a good mother to me. And, I want you to know I love you."

The mother started to cry and through her tears she said: "Son, that's the first time you've ever told me. Last Friday was your 63rd birthday and that's the first time you ever told me." Moore comments by saying, "Isn't that something? It took him 63 years to say 'I love you' to his mother" ("A Mother's Love").

Let me ask you something. Is there someone you need to express your love to today? Don't wait! Do it now!

If your parents are still living, when was the last time you told them you love and appreciate them? When was the last time you told your spouse, family and friends that you love them? When was the last time you told your children how proud you are of them?

People who don't feel loved and nurtured don't get very far in life. Studies have been done on infants. When infants are not hugged and nurtured, they have a greater chance of developing handicaps and illnesses as they grow.

Leo Buscalgia is a writer and speaker who goes around the world and talks about one important subject: love. He says that when he finishes speaking there is usually a long line of people waiting to see him. Buscalgia says that most of them are not waiting in line to talk to him, but to receive a hug. He says he comes across so many people who tell him that they have not been hugged or touched in years. They walk away from this encounter new people!

When we know we are loved, we can do anything, conquer anything, overcome anything! The apostle Paul said it best in Romans 8: "We are more than conquerors through Christ who loves us." Love wins!

A long time ago in a mining town in West Virginia there was a 17-year-old-boy who took a summer job in the coal mines. He thought being a coal miner for the summer would be cool and adventurous. He worked with a bunch of veteran miners who warned him not to stray away from the group because it was easy to get lost in the mine. However, the second week on the job he wandered away and got lost deep down in the mines. He screamed for help, but the miners had moved on to another location and no one could hear him.

Suddenly, the light on his helmet went out and he was in total darkness. He was absolutely terrified. He began to cry. He thought to himself:

"This is how it all ends for me.

I'm going to die down here.

I don't know which way to go.

I don't know how to get out."

He dropped down on his knees to pray:

"O God Help Me!" he said out loud.

"O God Please Help Me!"

As he was on his knees praying, he discovered something. He felt his right knee touching something hard. He felt it. It was a railroad track. He quickly put two and two together and realized that if he kept his hand on that track and followed it, he would be lead out! That's what he did. He held onto the track and followed the track and eventually it brought him

out of the dark, out of the depths of the mine and into the light (story from Moore).

I don't need to push this metaphor too far. James Moore told this story as a parable about the power of love. If we will hold onto the track of love and follow it we will always be led into the light, God's light. If we always keep an attitude of love no matter how dark or confusing life becomes, we will find strength and be led to the right answers.

Love wins! The love of God always wins. This is the essence of our faith and what the gospels teach us over and over again. Jesus sums it up in our text for today by telling us that the world will know we are Christians by our love – not by the way we worship—not by our knowledge of the Bible—not by our sophisticated theology—not by our judgments—not by our denomination—but by our love for each other!

There is no better story that expresses the power of love than "Love You Forever" by Robert Munsch. I am certain that many of you have a copy of this book somewhere in your house. It is a classic. (Because of copyright reasons, I cannot reprint the entire story in this manuscript). It is a story about a mother's profound love for her son and how that love influences future generations. The mother is always brought back to her love for her son at night as she picks him up and rocks him back and forth and sings,

"I'll love you forever,  
I'll like you for always,  
As long as I'm living  
my baby you'll be."

The love a mother –the love of a parent – what a profound love. It is a love that comes from Almighty God. This God comes to you today, picks you up and says, "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always. Forever and ever my child you will be." Feel that love. Share that love. Love always wins. Amen.