

## Real Affection

Romans 12:10

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Several weeks ago we talked about real love in connection with Romans 12:9. It runs: "Let love be genuine." The Greek word is "anhupokritos", which is obviously "non-hypocritical." In connection with that, we talked about the way we have dirtied the word "love" in our present generation by saying "I love you" when we really mean all kinds of other things. All of us know at least from movies, if we have not had the tragedy of experiencing it ourselves or with our friends, the fornicator who says, "I love you" simply to get rid of his guilty conscience and to make himself feel better. He doesn't mean "I love you" at all, but means "I lust after you" or "I need you" or "I want you" or "I enjoy you" or "I desire you." Or the parent who in all goodheartedness and good intentions says, "I love you" but really means "I want to keep possession of you and not lose you." We talked of how we have dirtied the noblest word in our language by using it when we don't really mean it. We said God's plan for us is so different from that miserable, dirty, selfish stuff. His desire is for us to live a life that is liberated into genuine love. You remember we talked about what real love was. It wasn't hard to find out. John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world that he gave..." Love is not getting, getting, getting; it is giving, giving, giving. When you say "I love you" it means "I give to you," not "I get from you."

Loved ones, as a parenthesis, we are kind of dumb. We are having our marital problems simply for one reason -- we are refusing to love. It is not that love has gone out of a marriage. That is old bluff. It is that we don't love, we are not loving. We are not giving; we are trying to get. The other person isn't giving us what we need. "I need emotional attention. I need material attention. They are not giving me what I need." Many of us are throwing ourselves onto a hopeless trail. Do you know what a hopeless trail it is, throwing yourself into divorce? Do you realize that divorce solves nothing? It creates mountains of problems. Do you realize that the next partner is not going to be any easier than this one? They aren't! Satan keeps deceiving us into thinking, "Oh, yes, the next one will be an absolute princess" or "The next one will be an absolute prince." They will not! They are much the same as the one you are now throwing away. Not many of us are paragons of virtue. Most of us are more or less the same. Loved ones, if we only knew that. But we cast ourselves into this divorce mill for one reason: they are not giving me what I need.

Could I let you into a secret? I have been married for twenty years, and many of us have been married twenty to forty years. Many of us have happy marriages, but many of us have not got what we needed either. We haven't! We would be unbearable people if our dear wives had given us what we wanted and what we thought we needed. Part of the way God makes us people that will be able to go to heaven, is He actually guides our partners not to give us all that we need. The idea of love as getting is heresy. That is why many of us are throwing away perfectly good partnerships that have built into them plenty of good discipline, plenty of good challenge, plenty of things that will drive us into Jesus for the things that we are trying to get from our partners.

We are throwing away perfectly good partnerships because we think that love is getting, getting, getting. Loved ones, sooner or later those of us who are breaking up our homes are going to come around to it. Do you realize that? You are sometime going to have to come around to the fact, "Wait a minute! I'm not going to get exactly what I want out of this. I'm not!" You will begin to realize that is just as our dear Father had planned, so that there would always be something that

would drive us out of this partially satisfying world and into the arms of the one alone who can satisfy. So the idea of love as "getting" is just a heresy. It is a heresy that sooner or later crumples you against a brick wall, and you may as well let it crumple you now as after a stream of unhappy, tragic relationships.

Love is not getting; it is giving. It is not even giving things. It is not giving jewelry, presents, flowers or chocolates. It is "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." Love is giving yourself. It is giving all that you are to the other person. We said it is giving your abilities and your aptitudes and your talents and your time and your interests for the other person to use as if they were theirs. That is what real love is. Actually, that is what our dear dads did. They made available to you all the money they could earn, all the talents they had, all the love they had, and they said, "It is yours, son, to use as you please." That is what they did for us. Real love is giving yourself to the other person -- all your abilities, all your talents --and letting them use them as they want for their own sake. You can't get away from the truth that is in John 15:13. It is the classic definition of love. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Love is not loving other people as much as you love yourself; otherwise, there would be a real battle there. "Will I lay down my own life or will I lay down their life? Now I've just to love them as much as I love myself." If love is: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends", it is loving them better than you love yourself, isn't it? It is vicarious. It comes from that Latin word "vicis", turn. It means putting them in your place, turning the whole thing round and putting them in your place. It means giving the same interest and attention and thoughtfulness to them as you used to give to yourself. When Jesus died for us, He died in our place. He died and bore what we should have borne. That is what real love is. It is giving yourself for the other person, for their benefit, putting them in the place that you used to put yourself. That is what we said love was about.

We all agreed, of course, that nobody could love like that. None of us can love like that unless we are absolutely certain that there is somebody else taking care of us. That is because we are little animals with a built-in self-preservation instinct. We are no fools; we are not dumb. We realize, "Now wait a minute! If I am going to lay my brains and my intellect and my abilities at the disposal of everybody else, for their benefit, then what brains or ability or intellect are going to look after my life?" We know that somebody must do that. That is why we said that you can't love the rest of us the way God loves you unless you are really sure that he loves you that way. Unless you are really sure that he is looking after your interests - -that he is going to take care of your job, or your marital future. He is going to look after your professional hopes.

Unless you are sure that he is going to do that, you really can't have the freedom to say, "Good, I'm going to forget myself. I can lay myself at the disposal of everybody else." In other words, you can only love the rest of us the way God loves you if God puts His Spirit in your heart. Romans 5:5 talks about the love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. God only gives that Holy Spirit to those of us who trust him implicitly with our lives. You really can't love the rest of us like that unless you trust your Father in heaven completely with your life. You remember that is where we ran up against trouble. Because most of us found that there is something inside us that was stubborn and would not trust God in that way for our marital futures or with our professional futures. There was something in us that rejected and resisted the idea of trusting God with our academic success or our financial security. There was some egocentricity inside us that would not trust God with those things lest he fail to look after them the way we wanted him to. We tried to trust him but we couldn't trust him, because we weren't sure he would take care of them the way we wanted him to.

That is where we saw the whole purpose of Jesus' death. That egocentricity inside us that will not trust God on those things was actually crucified with Christ. That was the whole point of Jesus' death. Romans 6:6 says our old self was crucified with Christ, and the moment we believe that, that moment God's Holy Spirit enables us to trust God as our Father and sheds abroad in our hearts love for everyone else -- a love that puts everyone else first.

I don't know if you have ever imagined what it is like. All of us probably experienced it when we were teenagers when we went out on some project. Maybe it was the carwash or something that we were all going to do as a family. It was one of those days when you went out and you didn't think of yourself at all. You just thought of what we all have to do as a group and you weren't trying to make a name for yourself among the rest. You just enjoyed it. So the day flew by and before you knew it, it was the end of the day and you hadn't thought of yourself once. It was one of the happiest days you have ever had in your life. That is the way God has for us to live every day. It is possible, loved ones, to let your old self be destroyed with Jesus so that God's Spirit frees you and liberates you from self-consciousness and self-concern so that you lay all your abilities and talents at the disposal of everybody else to do everything that is needed to bring them into a real relationship with God who loves them. That is the way we were meant to live.

Now to such who are "born crucified" --(that is what being a Christian is, it is people who are born crucified, people who are born of God's Spirit into a life that is crucified to what other people can do to you or for you, or what the world can do to you or for you -- who have begun to love everybody and to give themselves to everybody in order to bring that person into an awareness that God loves them) -- God gives us a further exhortation. That is today's verse. Romans 12:10. "Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor." Now that is a different command from the previous verse. The previous verse is "Let love be genuine," and that is to everyone. Let love to everybody be genuine. Love all men and women in order that they will come into an awareness that God loves them. But this is a little more limited. The word "one another" is "allelous" in Greek and it means "yourselves who are part of the family of God." You have a responsibility to love everyone in the world, and then you have another responsibility to love those who are like yourself. It is good to see that God's Word tells us we have to love each other with a brotherly affection. The love is different from the love that you give to the whole world because it is "Philadelphia". That is, it is "agape" love because it is a readiness to give yourself and it is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit but it takes the form of "Philadelphia" love. The Greek words are "philia" --love and "adelphos" -- brother. It is not just the brotherly love that fishermen have together who have a common interest, but it is the mutual love of the crucified for each other. God says to those of you who are born crucified, "Now love one another, too. Love one another."

I think we need to remember that. I think it is not only pastors that have been so busy looking after their churches that they haven't loved their wives or their children, but I know there were many of us who did fail in that way. We were so busy loving the whole world that there was no time to love our own or to love those who lived next door to us. Now God says, "Don't be like that. You who are born crucified, love each other with a brotherly love." Now you can see what that means when you get a group of people who are giving themselves to each other without any reservation, laying at each others' disposal their abilities and interests and talents and time so that each person can experience as much as possible God's love. And when those people are not looking for anything for themselves but are all giving that kind of love to each other, you have got something that is pretty close to heaven.

That is what the body of Christ is. It is a group of people who have been crucified as far as their own needs and time, giving themselves to each other fully and freely without reservation -- opening their hearts to each other and sharing exactly what they are with each other. Now that is what the body of Christ is. If you say, "Is it a kind of "in" group?" I think there are groups in every church that think they are the body of Christ and they are "in" groups, and they make you feel out of it. They make you feel the odd man out, but the true body of Christ doesn't make you feel that way at all. Their love is always going out. They are always anxious to make you feel more comfortable even than they feel themselves. They are always anxious that you should not in any way suffer for sharing your heart with them. They are always anxious that you would be happy more than they would be happy. They are always trying to draw other people into that circle of kindness and tenderheartedness. So no, they in themselves are not an "in" group.

Are they a kind of complacent group? No, because they are bent on a grand enterprise. The grand enterprise is that of bringing everybody in the world into an awareness of how much our dear Father loves us and cares for us. They are going out all the time in that way. They themselves are committed not only to each other but to the whole world. Most of all, the thing that binds them together is they all stand on one Man's blood. They all owe the same gratitude to the same Jesus. Of course that brings them -- when you all share the same obligation to the same sacrifice, it just brings a closeness that nothing else can bring. Loved ones, the love of the crucified is like heaven in itself.

If you say, "Is there such a group here?" Yes, and in most churches. It is smaller than the church and with plenty of other counterfeit groups around who say, "We are the body of the church" or "We are the body of Jesus" or "We are the company of the redeemed." Usually the company of the redeemed are undesignated because you can't nail them down. You can't nail them down to the elders, because they are bigger than the elders. You can't nail them down to the choir because they are different from the choir. Usually they are an undesignated group that aren't noted for meeting in a particular spot or having a certain kind of conversation, but when they meet each other they know the marks of the crucified in each other's faces and in each other's hearts, and they know these are people that they can trust and relax with.

Yes, there is such a group here. Yes, and it is heaven. It is the way we were meant to live. It is practical. It is a group of people who are interested in how each other is doing financially, how each other is doing materially. They are there with each other when there is a crisis or a difficulty. They are there when the house has to be painted and the person can't manage it themselves. They are there when the baby is ill and there is nobody to take care of it. But they are there most of all when the person is concerned and troubled about where their life is going. Those brothers and sisters are there sharing and feeling it with that person so it is like living in each other's heart and yet there is great dignity. You never feel pressured by them. They are sensitive to you and they are never absorbing you, eating you up. They are standing there always ready when you need them. So yes, there is such a group.

God did say something to me about this and I should tell you, because it came so clearly. He said, "The chaff see only chaff and the wheat see only wheat." I have given it to you now, and I think I understand it. It was last night when I was getting ready, because I thought, "What about the people who say, 'Oh, that church isn't like that. I haven't found people like that. They don't care.'" Well, the wheat sees only the wheat and the chaff see only the chaff. I think it says something. God has allowed the wheat and the chaff to grow together in every church. The kingdom, Brunner says, is

always smaller. The ecclesia is always smaller than the church itself, and so there is always wheat and chaff growing together. The wheat sees the wheat and the chaff see the chaff. Maybe we should take that to our hearts even if it is hard. In other words, be careful if you are seeing just bad things. Be careful if you are just seeing the people who gossip or criticize. There will always be chaff. But loved ones, there is in this place a dear group of people who are crucified or want to be crucified, and they are loving each other as brothers.

Now are you in a position where you are not experiencing that? I think it is a little difficult to experience it in practical down-to-earth terms if all you experience is this large gathering on Sunday morning. It is hard to experience very much practical help of one another if you only meet together like this. You can see that. Most of your agonies, most of my problems would come outside this one hour on Sunday and so, in a way, to experience the kind of practical love that this "philadelphia" love is, you need to be with a smaller group. It is not the only way to do it. I'm not saying everybody should be in a family group, but in a way you are kind of pushing your luck to hope that you will experience it just coming here for an hour on Sunday morning. That is why I would mention the family groups.

I just noticed that the article in the church bulletin says this: "We believe that all of us are to do what those people do in other large churches. We think that this is the way the body of Jesus worked in the New Testament: the sick were visited not by professional pastors but by members of their own family group who had established a life-long love and care for each other. We believe that it is more beautiful for a person to be buried by those who have been close in the affection and sympathy of all the daily trauma of life. It is more natural than to have some "professional" perform the service. In other words, the family group leader is the pastor of his or her family group: their daily lives, their relationship with God, their professional future, their difficulties with their children, their sicknesses, their marriages, their births, and their death -- all are the concern of his heart and ministry, and of each other member of the group." That is what the family groups are.

I would suggest that if you don't sense any of this in your experience of Campus Church so far, maybe you should seriously consider calling the office this week and saying, "I think it is time I get into one of those small family groups, those little Bible study fellowships of six or seven people that meet at home. I think I do want to get more into what this practical, real Christian love is about." If you are in a family group or you have experienced it and you think "that isn't what I see", maybe you should pray for eyes to see. I say that because I'm the guy that used to sin at our family dinner after church in Ireland where my dad was a leader in the Methodist church. He was always in the position that dads are -- to defend the church. I and my brother were the brilliant critics that could see everything wrong. We had the pastor for dinner every Sunday. We had him and cut him up and ate him in little bits. So I know where you come from when you do that, because such was I. But loved ones, maybe we should listen to that saying, "The wheat sees the wheat and the chaff sees the chaff." Maybe we should pray for eyes. "Lord, give me eyes to see this philadelphia love in my brothers and sisters, and then let me commit myself to being a source of it myself." I think that is what God wants for us. I would pray that you would make a start. It is very practical. It has to be practical. You have to make a first step towards meeting with a group of us that you can know as real friends, and that is probably the beginning for you.