

GOD IS LOVING.*

God is love. His heart is full of sacrificial good will toward us in Christ His Son. He is the initiator of love.

SCRIPTURE†	MUSIC‡
Psalm 121 Psalm 16 Psalm 84 Psalm 103:1-5 Psalm 107:1-9 Psalm 18:28-35 Jeremiah 31:3 Romans 5:6-9 Ephesians 5:25-32 1 John 4:7-11 1 John 4; 5:11-13	And Can It Be? Here Is Love Hide Away in the Love... (Cook/Sterling) SATB How Can It Be? How Deep the Father's Love for Us I Stand Amazed in the Presence More Love to Thee My Jesus, Fair My Jesus, I Love Thee My Song Is Love Unknown (Childs) SATB O How He Loves You and Me The Love of God What Wondrous Love Is This When Love Came Down (Cook/Shackley) SATB



NORTHWEST VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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* Fits as Part 3 of 4 in series, "God of the Gospel."

† Daily preparatory readings shown in **bold**.

‡ Published choral and vocal music shown in **bold**.

INTRODUCING & PROMOTING THIS THEME

LOVEABLE OR UNLOVEABLE

What does our society say makes you lovable? Advertising focuses on things such as white teeth, flawless skin, perfect hair, a nice vehicle, a fun personality, or athleticism. But God's love toward us is steadfast. He doesn't stop with saying "I love you"; He says "I still love you . . . in spite of [this]." He loves us even though we are sinful, diseased, bound for destruction, etc. (draw from Psalm 103)

We are seeing lots of pink, lots of red, lots of hearts this weekend. There's lots of "I love you" in the air. This holiday is our chance to celebrate all the people we love, and to think about all the reasons we love them.

What makes people loveable, anyway? In our noblest moments, we might say their character makes them loveable. Perhaps it's your spouse's commitment, or your special someone's thoughtfulness. Or some lighter attribute—that certain smile, that cute nose, those sweet comments.

If we asked our culture's advertising, we might conclude that what makes you loveable is—white teeth, or perfect hair; that new car. May you'll be loveable with those workout muscles (only possible, of course, with one brand of protein powder), or by buying someone a Coke with their name on it.

But sooner or later, if we're honest with ourselves, no purchase or physical change we make can hide the real us—the deep-down self that we know is ugly and broken and unlovable.

Isn't that why we so value the love of those who know us best? Many have said, "I love you." But it is a new and deeper love that says, "I still love you."

So who knows you best? God Himself. He sees and knows more of you than any other human being. And He says, "I still love you." In the words of Psalm 103, "He forgives all our iniquities. He heals all our diseases. He redeems our lives from destruction. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

God is the God of love. No human love can compare with His. We worship Him today. (Caleb French)

SAINT VALENTINE

Tell the story of St. Valentine. Many legends say that he married Christian couples, even though it was illegal at the time for Christians to marry. He witnessed to and tried to convert the emperor Claudius, but ultimately, Claudius sentenced him to death, and he was executed on February 14, 269 AD. Valentine defended marriage because he believed that God is the Creator of marriage and that married love is part of God's plan for His children.

For those approaching marriage as believers, it is an important thing to obey God's command not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. This admonition has served as a guiding principle for Christians throughout the centuries. Married love is a precious gift of God and is to be treated with great reverence while participating in its joys. Thankfully, there is nothing today in our country that prohibits God-fearing people from following this command and enjoying married love with another believer as God has intended it to be. But what if that were not the case?

Many legends surround a third-century man named St. Valentine, after whom Valentine's Day was later named. It is said that he married Christian couples even though it was illegal at the time for Christians to marry each other. It is also said that after he was imprisoned, he witnessed to and tried to convert the emperor Claudius. But ultimately, Claudius sentenced him to death, and he was executed on February 14, 269.

Valentine's actions demonstrated his belief that God, who is the fountain of all love, is the author of marriage. Married love is not the only manifestation of love God intended for humans. But, indeed, it is a precious gift given by the God of love for His own pleasure and glory. (James Tilson)

WOULD YOU DIE FOR HIM?

Romans 5:6-8 | *Romans 5 presents three categories of people: a righteous man, a good man, and a sinner. Show pictures of three people: Abraham Lincoln, a cashier or UPS driver, and Timothy McVeigh (OKC bomber) or Ted Kaczynski (Unabomber). Would you die for each of these people? Most of us would have to give the Romans 5 answer: No, we would not die for someone else, even a "really good" person. Christ knew that we are not really good people, that in fact we are sinners, and He chose to love us with a costly love. God's love does not cancel out His holiness and justice. Rather, His holy, just nature demands that His love must be infinitely sacrificial - and that incredible love is the love He has shown to us.*

For the last few Sundays, we have been working through how man can have a relationship with God. There's a problem. Man is a sinner and God is holy and cannot

tolerate sin. God is just and cannot overlook our sin. Today. God is loving and has reached out to us. How loving? What kind of love? Scripture does not simply tell us, God is Loving. No, Romans 5 presents some scenarios that helps us better grasp the depth of that love. Would a person have enough love for another person to actually DIE for him? Well, perhaps, depending on the type of person one was giving his life for.

[Show pictures.]

Here we have pictures of three people.

- Abraham Lincoln. I wonder would someone die for that “righteous man?” Actually that’d be pretty rare.
- How about the middle picture, a common laborer, a good person. Would someone die for that good person? That would even be rarer.
- You may recognize the person in the last picture, Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City Federal Building bomber. He was truly a sinner, responsible for the deaths of many, many people. Would anyone give their life to save his life? Not a chance.

Well, how loving is God? He did give his life, not for the righteous person, not for the good person, but for sinners. For you, for me. That is the ultimate love – he paid the highest price, his life, for the most unlovely, the sinner. You and me. Do you doubt his love today? Remember Calvary and his unconditional love – He loved even me – “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Mark French)