

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW . . .

is the name of a recent sermon I preached, as well as the name of a popular song from the last millennium. I read that the author of the song thought of it as a prayer to God saying we do not need more mountains or oceans. What the world needs is Love, Sweet Love. I thought of I Cor. 13 which reminds us that if we have all knowledge or all faith but do not have Love, it is meaningless. In that vein, I thought I would add to it and suggest we need LOVE more than we need . . .

. . . an iPhone 19 (we assume that will be the newest model by the time the Perihelion gets to you)

. . . the newest video game Super Mario Bros. 19 (we assume . . .)

. . . lower gas prices

. . . more money and a different job

. . . our favorite politician to be elected

. . . our favorite sports team to win (Go Padres!)

. . . guns and drone missiles

. . . our rights to (fill in the blank)

. . . revenge

. . . a bigger TV, car, and house

4 Versions of Jesus

1) The Successful Wall Street Jesus who wants to bless us and give us lots of material things.

2) The Romantic Hallmark-Christmas-Movie Jesus who wants to hold our hand, lift us up in troubled times, and take away our problems.

3) The American Political Jesus who enables us to use various types and degrees of power to enforce the moral or nationalistic views of our race/party/religion.

4) The Suffering Servant Jesus who loves us, died for us, and calls us to be like Him in loving/serving.

The primary goal of the Christian life is to be more like Jesus (Romans 8:28-29). He calls us to take up our cross and deny our selfishness, just like Jesus did. It is interesting that Jesus did not try to get better Roman officials elected to help end their corruption. He did not try to get better laws passed so the country would be more godly or moral. No, He focused on the hearts of individuals and the Kingdom of Heaven, which is within.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else you need will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

We have 2 strong emotions which battle within us . . . Fear and Love. Unfortunately 1) some did not get the unconditional love and attention they needed from their family while growing up or 2) have not fully realized the abundant, passionate, unconditional love of God for them. Both of these result in making it difficult to unconditionally love others who look and believe differently than we do. This leads to more insecurity and fear . . . and less *agape* love for others.

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" 1 John 4:18.

Fear vs. Love (Inwardly & Outwardly)

If someone has an abundance of **LOVE INWARDLY** . . . it results in self-esteem and security.

If the stronger emotion is **FEAR INWARDLY** . . . the result is never feeling good enough to measure up to God's standards or believing God could really love you.

Frederick Buechner's humorous definition of **ENVY**: "*The consuming desire to have everybody else as unsuccessful as you are.*"

If we have truly experienced agape **LOVE** in our lives **OUTWARDLY** . . . the result is Good Samaritan behavior (don't forget they were despised as a different race, religion, and nationality). It is the ability to treat others with love who are different than us in appearance and beliefs. The Bible encourages us in Romans 12:15 to rejoice in others' victories, even if they are not in our Christian clique or political party. Jesus told us to pray for enemies or those who simply look different than we do, build others up who lack self-esteem, welcome the stranger and the foreigner, witness to them, bring them into our lives so we can share with them the love of Jesus. **Be a Good Samaritan!**

On the other hand, if **FEAR** is our stronger emotion **OUTWARDLY** . . . we will often ignore others or belittle/slander/troll them. It might result in shooting someone who tries to steal from us or who might "replace" us (especially if they don't look like us, which in America often means if they are not white). It might lead to a fear of those coming from other countries (Samaritans?) or who have different philosophical, political, or religious belief systems, and can ultimately lead to violence against others who have different views or look different or worship differently than we do.

The Bible story of Jonah is a great example of overcoming this fear of others who are not like us. Jonah certainly wanted Ninevah to be destroyed and had to repent of his nationalistic pride in not wanting them to be redeemed and follow God. Rather than helping them turn to God, he desired for God to wipe them out. Jonah echoed the cry of not wanting those godless Ninevites to replace us! He finally learned God's love was big enough for everyone!

Another powerful example is found in Acts 9 when Ananias was fearful to go to Saul (a man who was in favor of murdering Christians!). Yet he trusted God more than his feelings as God filled his heart with more love than fear. As a result, Saul was baptized and took the new name of Paul. Rather than keeping his distance from this dangerous man, Ananias was used to influence Paul's journey toward the SON, which has even benefited me and you in the 21st century!