**Slide 1**

**Love Beyond All Measure**

**Luke 19:28-40; Luke 23:44-46**

Into: Today is Palm Sunday but it is also Passion Sunday. That means that in the span of one day, Jesus goes from being the peoples' proclaimed Messiah to the villain that the religious leaders are seeking to arrest.

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WE start with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

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Note: Jesus fulfills scripture related to being the Messiah, riding on a donkey, people laying down palm branches and coats both of which are OT signs of the Messiah. In addition these actions the people say, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven." again, the crowd was making it clear that they saw Jesus as the promised Messiah.

The city is abuzz with excitement and hope that Jesus would show his true nature and finally proclaim he is the Messiah, putting the religious leaders on notice and possibility with a show of force make them believe! (After all I believe this was Judas' hope.)

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But then Jesus entered the temple and drove out the money changers! This infuriated the religious leaders and they constantly looked for a way to kill him. But the spellbound crowds were always there and prevented them because they did not want to start a riot and cause Roman to send in troops and put others in charge. From this point on Luke tells us one story after another of how everyone turned away from Jesus which led to the cross.

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What do these two parts of Palm/passion Sunday have in Common? Love

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Love: 5th Grade – Patty Buchanan – sitting in my desk – longingly wanting to pluck up the courage to say something, tell her I loved her and wanted her to be my girlfriend – but just couldn’t!

Then one day I remember, she was walking back from the teacher’s desk, by my seat, paused and smiled at me! Sent a note that she’s heard I liked her – I was so elated!

This was on a Wednesday or Thursday. We sat with each other at lunch on Friday. It was a wonderful weekend – thinking about her. I wasn’t allowed to talk on the phone – but that didn’t matter, I didn’t want my brothers to know any way. They’d tease me unmercifully – When I went back to school on Monday, excited to see her after a loooong weeked, I found Patti smiling and talking to another guy – a 6th grader. No more smiles, no more sitting together. It was over – my first love – my first real heart break.

Transition – most of us whether a teenager or grown up, have such images when we think of love – romance.

But this is not the type of love that Jesus was motivated by on the Palm/Passion Sunday.

Hymn 292 – What Wondrous Love is This –

* Cause Lord of heaven – bear our curser for our souls
* Lord to put away his crown – his glory, his power for our souls
* What is proper response – Sing and tell of this love beyond all measure
* Because of God’s Love shower through the cross – we can sing and always be joyful.

Those gitty feelings – those sexual urges!

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But such is not real love

Because real love is not a feeling is it?

No – it’s an attitude and it’s way of living

Slide

Jesus: No greater love can you have than to lay down your life for another.

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Paul – 1 Corinthians 13:4 – Love is patient, love is kind, love is not – Envious, boastful, arrogant, rude.

Does not insist on its own way; not irritable, resentful; Does not rejoice in wrongdoing but Rejoices in Truth.

Love Never Ends.

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Love of God in Christ is the most power force in this world.

Part of the reason is the part that comes from the GK Word Agape

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Love that is freely given and doesn’t demand something in return.

As we journey on to Easter this year – my hope is that we’ll encounter this love in a powerful way!

Slide 11

Bedtime Story - Mother telling them

One Child's sharing their effect upon him – he was theology scholar – wrote many books and a paraphrase of the Bible

Story-telling by his mother

– He Loved them at bedtime, favorite part of the day

She was

* Good with words
* Good with expressions and tone
* Story came alive for him
* Stories of family – his grandparents coming from Norway to settle in Montana – 11 children.
* Best loved stories from the Bible!

But as he grew old and began to read and study the Bible for himself, he was surprised and a little disappointed to discover the details he read were not quite the same. the stories were not embellished like he remembered

But With additions of details, she never told the story wrong. She always had the most important parts!

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His mother knew the story of God from Genesis to Revelation inside and out – knowing Jesus, she let the Holy Spirit live through her as she prayed her way through a hard life in Montana with 11 children on a farm.

Love given in spite of so much adversity – what a gift to her son

I am reminded of a story I read once.

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Rev. John Powell, a professor at Loyola University in Chicago writes about Tommy, a student in his Theology of Faith class.

*Years ago, He stood watching my university students file into the classroom for our first session in the Theology of Faith. That was the first time I saw Tommy. My eyes and my mine both blinked. He was combing his long flaxen hair, which hung six inches below his shoulders.*

*It was the first time he had ever seen a boy with hair that long. It guess it was just coming into fashion then. He knew that it isn’t what’s on your head but what’s in it that counts; and Tommy had lots of tatoos. Professor Power was unprepared, and his emotions flipped. He immediately filed Tommy under “S” for strange . . . Very strange. Tommy turned out to be the “atheist in residence” in his Theology of Faith course that year. He constantly objected to, smirked at, or shook his head about the possibility of an unconditional loving Father/God. They lived with each other in relative peace for one semester, although Dr. Power admits he was for a serious pain in the back pew. When he came up at the end of the course to turn in his final exam, he asked in a cynical tone, “Do you think I’ll ever find God?” Dr. Power decided instantly on a little shock therapy. “No!”, he said very emphatically. “Why not?” Tommy responded, “I thought that was the product you were pushing.” Professor Power let him get five steps from the classroom door and then called out, “Tommy! I don’t think you’ll ever find Him,*

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*but I* ***am absolutely certain that He will find you****!” Tommy shrugged a little and left my class and the professor's life. Power felt slightly disappointed at the thought that he had missed his cleaver line: “He will find you!” At least Dr. Power thought it was clever. Later, the Professor heard that Tommy had graduated, and I was duly grateful. Then a sad report came. Dr. Power heard that Tommy had terminal cancer. Before he could search him out, Tommy came to see him. When he walked into my office, his body was very badly wasted, and the long hair had all fallen out as a result of chemotherapy. But his eyes were bright, and his voice was firm. “Tommy, I’ve thought about you so often - - I hear you are sick”, Dr. Power blurted out. “Oh, yes, very sick", responded Tommy. "I have cancer in both lungs. It’s a matter of weeks.” “Can you talk about it, Tom?” I asked. “Sure, what would you like to know?”, he replied. “What’s it like to be only twenty-four and dying?’ Power asked. “Well, like being fifty and having no values or ideals; like being fifty and thinking that booze,drugs, women, and making money are the real biggies in life.” He replied. Power began to look through his mental file cabinet under “s” where I had filed Tommy as strange. (It seems as though everybody he tries to reject by Classification, God send back into his life to educate him.) “But what I really came to see you about,” Tom said, “is something you said to me on the last day of class.” (He remembered) He continued, “I asked you if you thought I would ever find God and you said, ‘No!’ which surprised me. Then you said****, ‘But He will find you.****’ I thought about that a lot, even though my search for God was hardly intense at that time.” (My clever line. He thought about that a lot! thought Dr. Power) “But when the doctors removed a lump from my groin and told me that it was malignant, that’s when I got serious about locating God. And when the malignancy spread into my vital organs, I really began banging bloody fists against the bronze doors of heaven. But God did not come out. In fact, nothing happened. Did you ever try anything for a long time with great effort and with no success? You get psychologically gutted, fed up with trying. And you quit. “Well, one day I woke up, and instead of throwing a few more futile appeals over that high brick wall to a God who may be or may not be there, I just quit. I decided that I didn’t really care about God, and an afterlife, or anything like that. I decided to spend what time I had let doing something more profitable. I thought about you and your class and I remembered something else you had said****:***

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***“the essential sadness is to go through life without loving. But it would be almost equally sad to go through life and leave this world without ever telling those you loved that you had loved them.****” ‘So, I began with the hardest one my Dad.*

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*He was reading the newspaper when I approached him. “Dad.” “Yes, what?”, he asked without lowering the newspaper. “Dad, I would like to talk with you.” “Well, talk.” “I mean . . .it’s really important.” The newspaper came down three slow inches. ‘What is it?” “Dad, I love you - - I just wanted you to know that.” Tom smiled at Power and said it was obvious satisfaction, as though he felt a warm and secret joy flowing inside of him. "The newspaper fluttered to the floor. Then my father did two things I could never remember him ever doing before. He cried and he hugged me. We talked all night, even though he had to go to work the next morning. I felt so good to be close to my father, to see his tears, to feel his hug, to hear him say that he loved me." “It was easier with my mother and my little brother. They cried with me, too, and we hugged each other, and started saying nice things to each other. We shared the things we had been keeping secret for so many years. I was only sorry about one thing - - -that I had waited so long. Here I was, just beginning to open up to all the people I had actually been close to."*

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*“Then, one day I turned around and God was there. He didn’t come to me when I pleaded with Him. I guess I was like an animal trainer holding out a hoop: “C’mon, jump through. C’mon, I’ll give You three days, three weeks.’*

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***“Apparently God does things in His own way and at His own hour. But the important thing is that He was there. He found me! You were right. He found me even after I stopped looking for Him.”*** *“Tommy”, Power, practically gasped: “I think you are saying something very important and much more universal than you realize.*

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*To me, at least, you are saying that* ***the surest way to find God is not to make Him a private possession, a problem solver, or an instant consolation in time of need, but rather by opening to love. You know, the Apostle John said that: ‘God is love, and anyone who lives in love is living with God and God is living with him.”*** *“Tom, could I ask you a favor? You know, when I had you in class you were a real pain. But (laughingly) you can make it all up to me now. Would you come into my present Theology of Faith course and tell them what you have just told me? If I told them the same thing it wouldn’t be half as effective as if you were to tell it.”*

*“Ooh I was ready for you, but I don’t think I’m ready for your class.” “Tom, think about it – IF and when you are ready, give me a call.” In a few days, Tom called me, said he was ready for the class, that he wanted to do that for God and for me. So, we scheduled a date. However, he never made it. He had another appointment, far more important than the one with Dr. Power and my class. Of course, his life was not really ended by his death, only changed. He made the great step from faith into vision. He found life far more beautiful than the eye of humanity had ever seen or the ear of humanity has ever heard, or the mind of humanity has ever imagined. Before Tom died, they talked one last time. “I’m not going to make it to your class’, he said. “I know, Tom.” “Will you tell them for me? Will you tell the whole world for me?” “I will, Tom. I’ll tell them. I’ll do my best.” So, to all of you who have been kind enough to listen to this simple story about God’s love, thank you for listening. And to you, Tommy, somewhere in the sunlit, versant hills of heaven - - - I told them, Tommy as best I could.*

God is forward acting and living out of Love.

Jesus rode the donkey down from the Mount of Olives surrounded by the multitude he has preached to, healed and loved with reckless abandon! He knew full well that this act was irritating the Religious leaders to the point they would have to decide if he was really the Messiah or not! And it could mean he would be killed. But loved them anyway!

As the week progressed we see the religious leaders stay against him. Pilate and the Romans join forces with the religious leaders.

They responded to Jesus protecting their power, creed and political will to take the threat of Jesus away.

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**Not a speck of love did they show HIM!.** Yet, as we will see,

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Jesus loved and said "Father Forgive them for they know not what they do!"

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**Wondrous Love** the would had never experienced! Love so amazing so divine.

Mother's love for her son (and other children) to tell him the Bible stories from her memory and heart.

Love from a teacher that helped a young man be found by Jesus once he thought of others more than himself. Love of Jesus for all the world including those lusting for his blood!

What wondrous Love is this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dreadful curse for my soul. (292- What Wondrous Love is This)

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Love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!(292 - When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.)

During this last week before Easter, may to contemplate on **Jesus' love that is beyond all measure**!

Amen