

“Love Is Willing To Sacrifice To Bless Another”
Scriptural Reading: I John 4:9-10 (NIV)
KIRKING OF THE TARTAN SUNDAY

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November 28, 2007

Many of you have willingly made sacrifices for those you love. And, I would submit that the greatest love you have ever experienced is in regards to someone who willingly made sacrifices, out of love, to bless you.

However, there can be a major problem in offering such love. Eric Fromm in his book The Art of Loving contends that, “**The main condition for the achievement of love is the overcoming of one’s own narcissism.**” That is, to have the love focus on benefiting the other more than ourselves.

It seems as though people are less and less willing to make sacrifices because of their love, than in years gone by. Too often today people enter marriages seeking to **NOT render** but acquire, **NOT to give** but to get, **NOT to offer** but to receive. A lot of times there is the absence of any desire or willingness to make any kind of sacrifice for the betterment of the other. And, I believe that is one of the primary reasons why many marriages falter in our current society. No one wants to make any sacrifices!!! Yet, anyone who has been married **along time** will tell you that sacrifices have to be made, if real love is ever to be rendered.

Sacrificial love is the most powerful love that can ever be expressed. One of the first images that comes to my mind, regarding sacrificial love is the scene in the movie Titanic, where two people in love are floating together in the chilling sea, and find a door upon which only one could float. Can you picture the scene? The man places the woman upon the door and stays in the

water next to her, but ends-up freezing to death in the cold of the ocean. Love is willing to do stuff like that!!! To do something that willingly sacrifices to bless another. Later, the woman (Rose) stated this about the one who loved her, **“He saved me, he saved me, in every way a person can be saved.”** Why? Because of the love - the sacrificial love - that he was more than willing to render to bless her life.

Flora MacDonald was born in 1722 in south Uist, Scotland She grew up hearing many stories about Scotland’s past, including the story of King James II, who had been King of England and Scotland, but had been removed from the throne and exiled in 1688. Many Scots remained hopeful that someday King James’s son would return to lead Scotland. The Scots who wished for the return of a Scottish were called Jacobites, in honor of King James.

In 1745, Bonnie Prince Charles (grandson of King James) did return to Scotland for an attempt, but his follower’s ended-up suffering a horrible defeat in the Battle of Culloden. King George of England issued order to torture and punish those who had helped the prince. It was then that the English government imposed strict laws against the Scottish clans, forbidding them to have any symbols of their heritage and distributing their land amongst their English supporters.

The prince, who had escaped, needed to get out of Scotland in a hurry, but spent the next five months in hiding. It was Flora McDonald that played a key role in helping the prince escape. Risking her own life and retribution of her clan she ended-up disguising the prince as her maid *“Betty Burke,”* who many considered strange looking, but who in spite of appearance was able to fool the English. Legend has it that Flora and Bonnie Prince Charlie fell in love in the summer of 1746.

Something must have happened that involved love, be it her love of the prince, or her love of country or her love of her clan, but she willingly ended-up sacrificing her own safety to help the

prince escape. In spite of many a day being hungry, tired, fearful, and often soaking wet from the Scottish rains, she refused to leave him, until he escaped. Only love, real love willingly sacrifices like that! It's the greatest kind of love that can ever be rendered.

Father John Powell once stated that, **“Love means a concern for, acceptance of, and an interest in the others around me whom I am trying to love. It is a self-donation which may prove to be an altar of sacrifice ... Love is indeed costly and demanding ... because of a self-grasping world, it will be difficult for us to make the sacrifice of ourselves that is involved in loving.”**

You cannot read the writings of John in the New Testament and not realize that love **“agape love”** cannot be love, without sacrifice. Agape love is always given freely or willingly, for the sake of the bettering another. It is the kind of love Jesus calls us to in our marriages, in our church's, in our families, in our society, and in our nation. In the Greek there are a number of words for love. In the English language we only have one. There's **storge** “family love” there's **philia** “brotherly love,” there's **eros**, “passionate love,” and there is **agape** “sacrificial love” i.e., a love that gives of itself to bless another with **NO EXPECTATION, OF ANYTHING, IN RETURN!**

Lewis Smedes has a chapter in one of his books entitled “The Only Way To Make Love Last.” In the context of that chapter he shares a powerful story about James Edison and a lady named Alice whom he married. Only two years after their wedding day, Alice was in a terrible accident and almost died. However, she was never the same. She was paralyzed from the hips down, her memory became very spotty, and she could only utter sounds that James had to learn to translate. Yet James never complained. He just lovingly took care of Alice for fifteen years! Fifteen years! Smedes writes, **“Nobody ever heard a discouraging word from**

him ... In fact, someone asked James how he had done it ALL, so patiently, when he had not gotten such a poor smidgen of everything he had hoped Alice would give him?" He said he had NEVER thought about it! He just loved her!!! He just loved her with the greatest kind of love that anyone can ever render to bless another. A love, that WILLINGLY sacrifices to bless that which it loves.

Love willingly sacrifices to bless those that it is called upon to love – that's "agape love".

In today's Scriptural text John in writing about the profoundness, of what I'll phrase as "God love" states, **"This is how God showed HIS love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that WE MIGHT live through Him."** John goes on to state, **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."** No thought of self, but much thought of blessing others.

The Biblical scholar William Barclay notes in his commentary on I John that, **"When we look at Jesus we see two things about the love of God. (a) It is a love which holds nothing back. God was prepared to give his only Son and make a sacrifice ... in his love for mankind. (b) It is a totally undeserved love ... There are no limits to the grace of God ... It is the sight of his love that awakens in us the desire ... to love our fellow-man as he loves them."**

I ask you, is love really love, if it is unwilling to sacrifice? Can love be love without the willingness to make sacrifices in order to bless the life of another? I don't believe so!!!

You know, there was another striking scene in the movie Titanic that maybe some of you don't remember, but conveys a powerful message in-and-of-itself. It was after the Titanic had sunk people were yelling and screaming for those who were in the life boats to come and help them. A lady in one of the life boats tried to get those in her boat to go back and save some of the people. Her

words are rather haunting. **“I don’t understand a one of you! What’s the matter with ya? It’s your men out there! There’s plenty of room for more.”** To which a crew member angrily responded, **“You don’t understand! If we go back they’ll pull us down. They’ll swamp the boat.”** None of the others were willing to go back; none were willing to sacrifice themselves for those that they were suppose to love. In fact, only one life boat out of twenty returned to help, as some fifteen hundred people died that night.

It’s a chilling scene, compared to a young man who willingly sacrificed himself to save the woman he loved. But, love, real love is willing to sacrifice.

The love we are to offer is a type of love that lets people know that Christ cares about them, willingly sacrificed for them, and that because of that, as Christian people, we are to **willingly, not reluctantly, we are to willingly** seek to represent that kind of love to others – a love that seeks to bless their lives, even if it doesn’t benefit ours.

Jesus **willingly** sacrificed his life for the betterment of the lives of others. It was that kind of love, “agape” love, that he sought to have others share. A love that willingly seeks to bless the life of another.

I John 4:11 immediately follows today’s selected Scriptural text John writes, **“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another** (with a love that is **willing to sacrifice** to bless another).