

**Love, Love, Hooray for Love**  
**A sermon delivered at Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship, Thunder Bay, ON**  
**Sunday, February 8, 2015**

**Reading #1: Responsive Reading #638 “Love” [Corinthians]**

**Reading #2: “The Journey of Love”** [*from Mohammed Iqbal, 1873-1938, Muslim philosopher, poet, mystic & politician in British India*]

Where in our hearts is that burning of desire?  
It is true that we are made of dust  
And the world is also made of dust,  
But the dust has motes rising.  
Whence comes that drive in us?  
We look to the starry sky and love storms in our hearts.  
Whence comes that storm?  
The journey of love is a very long journey,  
But sometimes with a sigh you can cross that vast desert.  
Search and search again without losing hope;  
You may find sometime a treasure on your way.  
My heart and my eyes are all devoted to the vision.

**SUZANNE – Sermon: “Love, Love, Hooray for Love”** by the Rev. Suzanne Wasilczuk  
[SUNG:]

*Love, love, hooray for love  
Who was ever too blasé for love  
Make this the night for love  
If we have to fight, let's fight for love*

*Some sigh and cry for love  
Ah, but in Pa-ree they die for love  
Some waste away for love  
Just the same - hooray for love!*

(Sung by Ella Fitzgerald. Written Harold Arlen, in the 1948 movie *The Casbah*)

Next Saturday is Valentine’s Day. So today, we’re going to go sailing on the Love Boat.

We will make a lot of stops along the way, move through love and its many faces. You are welcome to linger anywhere your heart desires.

Valentine’s Day. Sometimes it seems this day is all about romantic love; and those of us not involved in a romantic relationship feel left out.

Love, it’s all around us. In romance novels: Jane Austen – Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars. Elizabeth Barrett and Mr. [Fitzwilliam] Darcy  
Then there’s the more contemporary *Twilight* series, a series of four books about the love between a forever teenage vampire, Edward Cullen, and a human girl, Isabella, Bella Swan.  
[And we mustn’t forget Jacob, the teen werewolf.]

There are the less exalted romance novels that the Rhapsody Book Club recently offered me:

“Holly is living on Cape Cod with her young daughter when she falls deeply in love with a man hiding a dark past.”

“Worlds collide when a proper Englishwoman flees to the American West and meets a rancher hardened by his violent past.”

“A rogue space captain finds his perfect first mate in Alix, a woman on the run from her dangerous past.”

And the love songs.

*One enchanted evening  
You may see a stranger  
You may see a stranger  
Across a crowded room.*

Like the Crown Prince, seeing Prince Lee for the first time: “What a wonderful prince!”

“What a wonderful princess!” [a reference to the children’s story, *King and King*, by Linda de Haan.]

*I bless the day I found you.  
I want to stay around you.  
And so I beg you,  
Let it be me.*

*I can't stop loving you,  
I made up my mind  
To live in memory  
Of the lonesome times.*

*(I can't stop wanting you)  
It's useless to say  
So I'll just live my life in dreams of yesterday*

*Those happy hours that we once knew  
Tho' long ago, they still make me blue  
They say that time heals a broken heart  
But time has stood still since we've been apart*

Songs of love found, love lost, confusion, heartbreak.

Country Western songs that lay it on the line:

*All the Guys that Turn Me On Turn Me Down*

*Am I Double Parked by the Curbstone of Your Heart?*

*Billy **Broke** My Heart at Walgreens and I Cried **All** the Way to Sears*

*I Keep Forgettin' I Forgot About You.*  
And, a personal favorite,  
*Get Your Tongue Outta My Mouth 'Cause I'm Kissing You Goodbye.*

Pick your decade. Pick your genre.

*I feel it in my fingers, I feel it in my toes.*  
*Well love is all around me, and so the feeling grows.*  
*It's written on the wind, it's everywhere I go.*  
*So if you really love me, come on and let it show.* (The Troggs)

There are the movies. Pick your decade. Pick your intensity.  
Gone With the Wind.  
Titanic  
You've Got Mail  
When Harry Met Sally [especially that scene in the coffee shop...]

And the jokes:  
I'll leave those for coffee hour. (Ole & Lena)

Here we are talking Eros.  
Eros. Passionate, sensual desire and longing. Physical attraction. Endorphins.  
Palpitating heart and sweaty palms. Queasy stomach. Warm fuzzy feelings.

Aphrodite in her see-through nightie. Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love.  
Aphrodite who could be “gentle, fierce, pure, slutty, unpredictable, complex, fickle, steadfast, beautiful.”

Aphrodite had a rocky marriage – most marriages between Greek gods & goddesses were pretty rocky – to Hephaestus; and a string of lovers: Ares, Hermes, Poseidon, Zeus, a little-known minor water deity named Nerites.  
(See [www.paleothea.com/SortaSingles/Aphrodite.html](http://www.paleothea.com/SortaSingles/Aphrodite.html).)

Valentine's Day sometimes seems all about this sort of romantic, lusty, love.

When we send our teenagers through our sexuality program – Our Whole Lives, OWL – we're trying to help them navigate through that turbulent sea of emotions.

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In English we have only one word for love. The Greeks, like the Inuit with their many words for snow, the Greeks had a number of words for love. Eros is just one of those words, those conceptions of what love is.

Storge is another – a natural affection – the love we find within families, between the mother and the father, between brothers and sisters, between parents and their children. Grandparents and their children. The love for our pets.  
Storge involves long term commitment. Blood ties.

Sometimes we create these family ties – through adoption of a child. Through establishing a family within our work place, within our neighborhood, within our affinity group, within our congregation.

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, the patriarch Tevye is confronted with the newfangled notion of romantic love. His daughters want to marry for romantic love, instead of marrying the man he chose for them, marrying for dutiful love.

Tevye asks his wife Golde:

*Do you love me?*

Golde answers: “I’m your wife

But Tevye persists:

*But do you love me?*

(Golde)

*Do I love you?*

*For twenty-five years I've washed your clothes*

*Cooked your meals, cleaned your house*

*Given you children, milked the cow*

*After twenty-five years, why talk about love right now?*

(Golde)

*Do I love him?*

*For twenty-five years I've lived with him*

*Fought with him, starved with him*

*Twenty-five years my bed is his*

*If that's not love, what is?*

(Tevye)

*Then you love me?*

(Golde)

*I suppose I do*

(Tevye)

*And I suppose I love you too*

*Storge* – familial love too needs reassurance, reinforcement, the hope that love is not simply a duty.

Next is *philia* – the love for friends, a more dispassionate, more grounded sort of emotion.

*Philia* –Philadelphia – the City of Brotherly Love.

For the Greeks one could only be friends with someone who was one's equal – in education, in class, in virtue, in courage, in physical strength and skill. For Greeks husband and wife were rarely friends.

Aristotle talks about this sort of emotion being demonstrated by young lovers (1156b2), lifelong friends (1156b12), cities with one another (1157a26), political or business contacts (1158a28), fellow-voyagers and fellow-soldiers (1159b28), members of the same religious society (1160a19), or of the same tribe (1161b14), a cobbler and the person who buys from him (1163b35)."

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philia>; accessed 3 February 2015.

Philia is also the kind of love you might have for your dog or cat; a movie; ice cream; barbecued ribs; chocolate. Watching the Super Bowl or soccer.

Best friends. BFFs. The fellowship of folks you enjoy.  
*Good friends all gather round*  
*There's something I must say*  
*That what brings us together here has blessed us all today.*  
*Love has made a circle that holds us all inside.*  
*Where strangers are as family, loneliness can't hide.*

Love makes a circle around us.

The fourth sort of love is *agape*. Agape is unconditional love. Love for another despite their flaws, their weaknesses. Despite our differences.

We draw a circle. We draw the other into our circle.

American poet Edwin Markham [1852-1940] wrote:

"He drew a circle that shut me out --  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in."

*Agape* is the kind of love most demonstrated in the Christian Bible.

The Good Samaritan caring for the wounded Israelite who, if that Israelite were healthy, wouldn't give that Good Sam the time of day.

The Golden Rule: Love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus caring for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the dying – those outside the usual circles of power.

Every religious tradition has a golden rule.

Judaism writes, in the book of Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Islam says "Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you.

Hinduism tells us: "This is the sum of duty: to do nothing to others which would cause them pain."

In Buddhism the Bodhisattva, the enlightened person, the person who sees the other side of the darkened mirror, who sees fully the unity of all – the Bodhisattva returns to this life, again and again, to help fashion a world in which all can come to enlightenment.

A traditional Shaker song tells us: (arranged by Harmony Grisman)

*If we have not peace, in our daily communion,  
How can we have peace, in the world at large?  
And if we have not kindness, for one another,  
How can we have kindness, in our government and laws?*

*More love. More love.*

*The heavens are calling, the angels are crying: Oh Zion, more love, more love.*

This kind of love, agape, unconditional love, is hard work.

It's easy enough to love those we like, those with whom we feel some bond, some kinship, some common ground, common belief.

It's not so easy to love those we dislike, those who disappoint us, aggravate us, anger us. Loving those with whom we do not, or cannot, agree.

That kind of love is hard work.

*Love is born in fire; it's planted like a [seed](#).  
Love can't give you everything, but it gives you what you need.  
And love comes when you're ready, love comes when you're afraid;  
It'll be your greatest teacher, the best [friend](#) you have made.*

*So give yourself to love if love is what you're after;  
Open up your hearts to the tears and laughter  
And give yourself to love, give yourself to love.*

That song was written by Kate Wolf, two years before she died of leukemia at the age of forty-two.

Our Universalist forebears saw God as a God of Love, a God who welcomed all to the table; a deity who was too loving to condemn any of God's children to a hell.

“Universalists claims love as central. Universalism trusts that all of us are *held* in the arms of a universal love, no matter what we have done or not done. *Held* is the operative term. This day, and throughout one's entire life, the full-blown cosmos rests in the grasp of a loving power. Such is the overruling Universalist affirmation.” (Tom Owen-Towle, *Freethinking Mystics with Hands*, 62)

In the Jewish tradition, angels (*malachim*) are not considered supernatural. Angels are messengers from God, messengers from the Great Mystery that is the Cosmos, messengers from Universal Love.

Angels remind us of that Ultimate Compassion. Angels, those who give us support, encouragement, hope, good cheer – angels are all around us.

Angels are us.  
We hold each other, in love.

*You are held by holy angels,  
Holy angels all around you.*

*Hush, now, sleep child, sing the holy angels.  
We are holding you.  
You can rest.*

*Morning will come, child,  
the dawn will break thru the darkness.  
We are holding you  
thru the light of the new born day.*

We are held by holy angels. And we are those angels, those *malachim*, those messengers of Love.

A song written by Sara Thomsen, a Duluth singer and songwriter who directs Echoes of Peace, a community chorus and who, for a number of years, with the local rabbi and a professor from the University of Minnesota – Duluth, formed the group, *The Three Altos*.

Three summers ago Sara proposed to her longtime love, Paula – that professor. Sara and Paula were married two years ago.

And so we come full circle – agape, storge, philia, eros.

Love makes a bridge  
Breaks the walls  
Finds a way  
Lifts the hope  
Rings the bells  
Guides the hands  
Carries us through fear and loss.

Love is patient.  
Love is kind.  
Love never ends.  
    Love alone diminishes not  
    but shines with its own light...

Nor can that endure which has not  
its foundations upon love.

*Love, love, hooray for love  
Who was ever too blasé for love  
Make this the night for love  
If we have to fight, let's fight for love*

This Valentine's Day,

May we experience our Creator's changeless love; know the Care that cares for all; love wisely and well.

May we feel held in Creation's ever-changing love: the creativity and the chaos that is this cosmos.

May we stand in a holy place, on the side of love.

May it be so. May we make it so. Blessed be. Amen, and amen.