

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

THE CIRCLES OF LOVE

Text: He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. I John 4:8.

The first thing we had better do is to stake out the center from which our circles of love emanate.

From the Christian point of view, the center of our expression of love is our personal relationship with God. This is what makes Christian love different from other kinds of love. You may not see the difference on the surface. It lies in the motivation, the driving power, deep within the person.

The generative origin of love is God's love for us. We are made for love. But our inherent power must be released by God's love. God is love, we say. This means that he actively gives himself on our behalf. Therefore, our first act must be to receive, to accept, to respond to God's freely offered love. This is what gives us the motivating power to live with some measure of love in the concentric circles of our life. The Holy Spirit will work in us to renew and deepen our proper powers of love.



REV. D. M. CLARK

THE FIRST HINDRANCE TO LOVE is not external at all but within ourselves! The reason why I cannot love is that I am not the kind of person that can love.

The Christian claim is that the love of God is already given to us. The first act of love on our part, then, is to accept, to receive, to respond to His love. This becomes the healing, empowering center of our expression of love for others. We are ready to accept the discipline, the training, the hard work of growing, necessary to become the kind of person that can love.

From this center we move into and through the circles of love. Let us speak first of the intimate circle of the family. This is the circle in which we, as persons, ought to be able to find the finest, the deepest, the most healing expression of love.

THE FAMILY IS THE CHANNEL through which God wishes to communicate Himself. The love of parent for child becomes the means by which that child learns of God's love. The love of husband and wife for each other is a means by which God's love can be experienced in a more mature manner and by which each person grows.

Of course, the tragedy is that all too often this doesn't happen. There can be many reasons.

Those of us who are living-in and with a family of growing persons ought to be willing to give our best efforts, our utter devotion, to the experience of this kind of love in our family.

NOW LET US MOVE to the impersonal circle of society, the world of casual acquaintances, people to whom you sometimes only nod in greeting, your tough competitor or your unpleasant neighbor. What does it mean to love under these circumstances?

When we enter this kind of less intimate relationship, love must resort to law. Law is always less than love. But love requires law as a structure for less-than-immediate-personal relationships. So justice is the minimum expression of love.

TO LOVE IS TO SEEK JUSTICE, or better, out of genuine concern for the well-being of the other person.

It becomes our Christian responsibility to seek justice and to feel concern for one another into the order of society.

Love can be firm. There are times when love MUST be firm. Love must have strength. When love is confronted with aggression or with irresponsibility, it must act with firmness, with decision.

Love has strength and courage. Love has

A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS BIRTHDAY



REV. V. C. L. COLEMAN, Pastor of the Second Baptist Church has, probably, hundreds of reasons for showing such delight at the birthday celebration staged by the Church's Pastor's Aid Society honoring their beloved Pastor's natal day.

A beaming Rev. Coleman surrounded by Parishioners, displays the vest of five dollar bills gifted him by the Pastor's Aid Society. He was the recipient of many other gifts, also, from individual members of his Church.

Guest Ministers at the happy occasion were Rev. I. W. Wilson and Rev. J. L. Simmons.

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standards and principles and is not afraid to insist that they be respected. Certainly we all recognize the necessity of this in the growth of our children. And it is just as true in the larger circles of society.

There are, then, one or two practical things that we can do.

We can keep an eye to the interests of others as well as to our own.

We can keep ourselves open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Remember that if you are going to love, you must be the kind of person that can love.

AND THEN, I think that you can pray that you may be led into a personal relationship with someone, of such depth and dimension that it may become the kind of redeeming, health-giving experience you need.

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