



SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Sermon for Sunday, July 28, 2019

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

FR. ALAN GIBSON

Genesis 18:20-33 | Psalm 138 | Colossians 2:6-19 | Luke 11:1-13

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Think for a moment about the one person in the world who is dearest to you. This is not a test. I'd just like you to do a little personal mental survey. Now that you have that person fixed in your mind – what are some their likes and dislikes (foods, colors, vacation spots). What are some of the things that endear that person to you – their sense of humor, gentleness, talent, generosity...? What are some of the things that annoy you about your nearest and dearest? I won't offer any suggestions. Do you have a pet name for this person, a name you utter only in private, when it's just the two of you? Finally, what are some the things about that person, that even after years of togetherness, still baffle you?

Now, what do you have? Just a lot of information. Helpful information that can make life easier and relationships run more smoothly. But does information, even very personal information, lead us to love another person, much less, be completely devoted to them? Probably not.

So why, above all others, do you love that one person? Any reason you can possibly come up with will not fully answer that question, even when put with a thousand other reasons, except for one. You love that person, because you need that person; not because you both like the same things, or because you understand their quirks, or share the same viewpoints; but because you need that person and your life would not be remotely the same without him or her.

Some people find this with a spouse, a partner, a sibling or a friend, or a parent. And there's nothing at all wrong with calling it what it is. It is worship. Sometimes it gives us a little glimpse of heaven, here on earth. But that's not the only one. We are offered another, by being allowed to fall in love with God through something called prayer.

Run through those words we heard Jesus use in the gospel – some of the best known group of phrases in our memories. It's all there, the building blocks of a loving relationship: likes and dislikes, common viewpoints, qualities of endearment, daily sustenance, even a pet name – Daddy, Papa, which is what Jesus actually said, not the more formal, "Father." We

say the prayer that Jesus taught us a least once a week. But Jesus wasn't trying to teach us a formula to recite, he shows us there is love and a need for love out there beyond our own.

When his disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, they weren't looking for words. Their own tradition gave them plenty of words. They were seeking something that was missing in their lives: a slice of heaven on earth that was more than just a fleeting glance. They wanted something on which to build a life, to give life purpose. They already knew they needed God. But how were they going to get to God? When Jesus showed them the way, what they learned was that, all along, God needed them. God needs us.

That's what makes love real, isn't it? If you truly love that person I asked you to think about earlier, then you must be pretty confident they feel the same way about you. The need is mutual. If it is, then both of you know one of the greatest blessings this life has to offer. Still, all sorts of feelings get mislabeled as love, that are, in reality, little more than a one-sided obsession. Like the adoration lavished on a media star.

True love isn't one-sided. It happens when both parties know they need each other and seek to meet those needs. It's the same with prayer. Prayer is how we respond to God's love for us; and prayer is how we meet God's needs. It too is called worship. God seeks our prayers so that God's love has somewhere to go. In prayer we can get more than just a glimpse of heaven, we can begin to live it. When that happens, we won't need to conjure up God in our minds, because God, who is our truest love, will always be with us in our hearts.