

***CRIBB<S>NOTE - May 17, 2009***

Many years ago my neighbor and good friend Bill lived in an apartment upstairs and around the corner from me. He used to take pride in sharing stories about his many and varied life experiences, including the time he spent in a Mexican jail for public drunkenness. Bill was philosophical about almost everything and had points of view that were outside the mainstream on many topics. He loved people and never imagined himself better or worse than anyone else. During one of our many extended talks, Bill turned quiet and then slowly phrased, "You can't be grateful and resentful at the same time."

The physical law of occupation applies to human emotion and reaction. Two opposing sentiments cannot exist in the same space at the same moment. It is a simple truth that Bill realized and offered as wise counsel to a young neighbor. The same can be said about love. It is impossible to love and hate. The extraneous, if not impossible, effort to do both at once will most likely result in a psychiatric diagnosis that could lead to detainment in a mental health institution.

Toward the end of his life, Jesus had a heart-to-heart conversation with his most trusted and intimate disciples. He used his skills as a teacher to give final instructions about the important work they had to perform. The basis of their mission was love. Everything they were supposed to do was predicated on their ability to care for each other and to make a priority of putting others ahead of themselves.

Jesus pointed to himself and the three years of public ministry he had shared with his followers as examples for how he expected and needed his disciples to follow him and lead their lives. Their power came from God's love for them and the world. In order for the disciples to go forward, they had to make love the fundamental practice of their faith. When we review the record, we read a consistency in the community the disciples formed. They loved one another.

That is the same message given to us for these days. In our homes, on our streets, across our city, throughout the United States, and around the world we witness a great need for love. Love is not sentimental and romantic. Love is passionate and built on empathy and compassion. We listen to voices of people who scream and groan and we attend to the concerns of others who suffer and live with despair. Love pushes us from comfort to engagement in issues that put our own lives at risk.

Jesus said to his disciples, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friend" (John 15:13 NRSV). Love causes us to see the world as a home where all God's children reside. It propels us to think far beyond ourselves and obey God's commandments. Love requires dedication and commitment to justice and equity for all people.

We have been entrusted with the care of the earth and every living thing. In these days of tremendous challenges from global warming to an economic meltdown, people of faith are summoned to practice our love. Jesus says to us, "Look at me and do what I have done." Through God's grace we have been given the comfort of the Holy Spirit and instructed 'to go into all the world' and tell the story of God's love. Love binds us in courage and provides a clear focus of our purpose.

You and I have been called to stand together in a just cause for the sake of children, elders, families, and individuals who need to know they are loved. The food we

collect every Sunday for the poor and the hungry as encouraged by our own Sister Liz Cameron is an expression of love. When we open our doors and facilities to persons in recovery, we demonstrate love. As we leave the sanctuary and go into the streets, we are given chances to love someone. Don't be afraid. Go and love!