

FORGIVEN

CHURCH

Hello again!

We trust you are off to a great start this 2023 and have amazing plans ahead of you!! (Just go crazy!!)

So, it's almost February! (I know!) Ya might be wondering what we're gonna talk about this month, right? Well.. No fear here cuz we're NOT gonna discuss all those New Year resolutions that we had such high hopes for (too bad they weren't that exciting after all)! Nope, we're gonna just move on as if those things never even happened and talk instead about love. (How's that sound?) It is almost Valentine's Day after all.

Can you believe that we are just about ready to walk into February? This beautiful month of LOVE! A month focused on kindness and consideration and chocolates. A month saturated with sappy cards, springlike flowers, tons of chocolates (I love chocolate that's why it gets a 2nd mention), and the kindest, sweetest words you'll probably ever hear! People just seem so extra nice. Now, to be honest, who is thankful for all the love and nice-ness, huh??? (And Chocolate?)

Afterall, love is such a powerful thing that can do some pretty amazing things! It can cheer up the downcast. It can put a smile on the saddest face. It can fill a lonely heart with joy and peace. It can put a twinkle in someone's tear filled eye or boost someone else's low self esteem. It can give another a reason to get up in the morning or a purpose to walk on one more day. Yep, Love is miraculous! Love has the power to change so much for so many. It's really quite impressive if ya just stop and think about it! (Let's do that right now..let's think about it!)

What a blessing, really, to be reminded every February, that we were created for more than just the usual daily grind. (So boring!) We weren't meant to simply ignore people around us as we rush on past them to success or better things. We weren't created to just run over people or act like they aren't even there. We aren't created to live our life all by ourselves, focused on ourselves, ignoring everyone important in our lives. (Come on, now). We won't flourish that way cuz it's not who we are. We are supposed to go slow enough to see people. To notice people. To really care about people. We should look around when we go into a store, or restaurant, or place of business or maybe in the kitchen of our own home. Cause there's a lot of hurting people around us everyday that would give anything in the world to just know that they are seen, and not just seen, but that they are loved. (We think we could do an awesome job at that, huh?) You know what that feels like, right? To be loved? It puts wind in your sails. It

pumps up your expectations. It puts a pep in your step. It makes you feel like you are walking on cloud 9 (whatever that expression means) and that you can do anything in the world. When you are loved and you know you are... there's no stopping you! Being LOVED just changes everything. It's so very powerful!!

God even knows that! The bible says in *John 3:16* "For GOD so loved the world (that's you and me and the person at the grocery store) that He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus)..." He gave so much because He loved so much. He didn't hold back. He couldn't help himself. He loved you and me so deeply that He just wanted us to know it. Feel it. Be changed by it. He couldn't keep it from us. He refused to hide it from us. He chose not to be too busy (running the whole world!) to mention it to us and show us. Why? Because His love was about to change EVERYTHING and He knew it!! Because He knows the power of it.

Because love does that. It's a small word that we sometimes abuse and overuse, but the truth is, the power in that word can change anyone, anytime, regardless of anything. Love changes things. And it really changes people!!

So, #1, in honor of the month of LOVE (in case you needed to be reminded), we wanted you to know that God loves you so stinkin' much! (And, no, not just in February, but it seems like the perfect time to remind you, so we are). GOD loves you completely. All the time, my friend, all the time. You can't talk Him out of it (So don't bother to try cuz He won't listen). Every moment of every day He loves you. In your good times and in your bad. When you behave and when you don't. When you do right and when you mess up and make a fool of yourself (and, yes, won't we all?). God loves you when you don't think that He does, or He could or wants to. It's best to just accept the fact that you are a pretty amazing person. (and oh soooo lovable!!)

And, #2, remember, so is every person your life comes into contact with, in February and beyond! They are oh soooo lovable too (even if they get on your last nerve). Let's just do each of us a favor, shall we? Let's just remind each other that people around our world need to know that we love them. They need to know how extremely precious they are to us (and to Jesus). They need to know that our life is so much better just because they are in it. They need to know that our love isn't because they are perfect, but just because they ARE. And yes, people will push your buttons and maybe tick ya off but love them anyway! (Let's be honest, we do that to God every single day and He still chooses to love us, right?). So, how about it? Let's just be extra nice, huh? Can we do this?? Yes, we can!!!

Happy month of LOVE, our friends!

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SERVICE TIMES

Bluffton: Sundays at 9am & Thursdays at 7pm • Fort Wayne: Sundays at 11am