

TIME OF REFLECTION

“Love is divine only and difficult always. If you think it is easy you are a fool. If you think it is natural you are blind. It is...without reason or motive except that it is God.”

~Toni Morrison (1931-2019) in her book *Paradise*

“The truth doesn’t change. It was the same when Moses got the Ten Commandments as it is today. That’s the thing about the truth. That’s the thing about real. It doesn’t change and it doesn’t have to change. Now you can put it in a different book, but it’s still real. It’s still the truth.”

~DMX, aka Earl Simmons (1970-2021), rapper and songwriter

“Immediately upon the Fall [into sin] the mind of man shrunk from its primitive greatness and extensiveness into an exceeding diminution and confinedness... whereas before his soul was under the government of that noble principle of divine love..., enlarged to a kind of comprehension to all his fellow creatures; and ... extended to the Creator, and dispersed itself abroad in that infinite ocean.... But as soon as he had transgressed... he thenceforward shrunk into a little point, circumscribed and closely shut up within itself to the exclusion of others. God was forsaken and fellow creatures forsaken, and man retired within himself and became wholly governed by narrow, selfish principles. Self-love became an absolute master of his soul.....”

~Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), pastor, theologian and philosopher

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

~God through the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

“The great military leaders of the past have gone, their empires have crumbled and burned to ashes. But the empire of Jesus, built solidly and majestically on the foundation of love, is still growing.”

~Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), minister and civil rights leader

Worship through the Word

SERMON – “Lifted Up in Love” – *Pastor Don Willeman*

SERMON PASSAGE – *John 3:1-21 (ESV)*

John 3

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not

perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

Numbers 21

⁴ From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” ⁶ Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷ And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.