

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Let's play a little trivia –

What happened on June 25, 1530 A.D.?

On June 25, 1530 AD, the Confession of Lutheran teaching and faith was presented to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in the city of Augsburg Germany.

Here's one a bit easier:

What happened on June 25, 1967?

On June 25, 1967, the very first international television program occurred. Now we hear from reporters from everywhere overseas. But this was the first time the signal bounced off a satellite, allowing the whole world to watch.

Each participating nation was asked to provide something special. Great Britain shared the work of their most famous folk: The Beatles. The song heard in public all over the world for the very first time: "All you need is love."¹

One last trivia question: which of the following did *not* sing in the chorus for that broadcast of "All you need is love"?

Pastor Schlegel

Keith Moon

Mick Jagger

Madonna

Eric Clapton,

Graham Nash
Keith Richards
Taylor Swift
Katy Perry

Sing with me --

All you need is love,
all you need is love,
all you need is love love,
love is all you need.

I think Jesus likes this song – if the Bible had a soundtrack, maybe this would be the one for today’s Gospel.

The love Jesus speaks of in this passage and which John repeats in his letters, is *agape* love,

Deep, self-sacrificing caring for the best for the other.

This kind of love is in short supply in our culture, a situation causing deep conflicts and divisions among us.

In our day, culture has placed the highest value on self-preservation, regardless of the costs.

America First!

Me first!

And entitlement – those who are first should have the best of everything, even if others must go without.

The divisions over health care,

immigration,
global warming,
and environmental care, to name a few,
hinge on the capacity to love as God loves – or not.

Are we – as a culture – willing to sacrifice having the best so that everyone can have what is necessary?

Another Beatles' song from the same year, “Within you! Without you!” starts,
"We were talking about the space between us all, and the people who hide themselves behind a wall of illusion"

and goes on to speak about “the love we all could share” that closes the gap between people – and “with our love we could save the world...”

The song –using words of Jesus -- raises the question:

We were talking about the love that's gone so cold
And the people who gain the world and lose their soul
They don't know, they can't see, are you one of them?

I know when I am honest with myself, I am one of those people sometimes.

- The temptations of the world,
- my own sense of entitlement,
- my sense of self-preservation
- are barriers to God’s agape love.

I confess that it can be hard to love with God’s love.

The good news is, we don't have to manufacture agape love.

We don't have to Google its recipe

Shop for the ingredients

Whip up fuzzy good feelings

And voila! Have a batch of agape to use like Febreze.

No, Jesus simply reminds us that **agape love is an experience of God.**

We experience agape love in relationship with him

As he experiences it in relationship with his Father.

All we do is keep experiencing his love – abiding in it.

Agape love is a particular kind of relating.

It is not a thing, such as can be ordered from Amazon or picked up at Walmart.

Jesus says "*As I have loved you, so you are to love one another.*"

"As" – meaning, **in the same manner** in which I have loved you, you are to love one another.

If we were art students, and our morning teacher, Pablo Picasso, told us to paint an apple in the manner in which he demonstrated,

it would be a much different painting than the one in the afternoon when our teacher, Bob Ross, would give the same instructions.

If we loved one another in the same manner as Jack the Ripper, life would be much different than loving *as* Jesus loved us.

Jack the Ripper's love was to take other's lives to feed his own needs.

Jesus' love gives up his own life to feed other's needs.

No greater agape love has any one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

We experience Jesus loving us by laying down his life for us every time we receive Holy Communion.

Every Sunday, Jesus makes sure we know what it means to be agape loved by him.

He invites us to come together –

- with all our problems and issues
- and baggage and discontent
- With all our open wounds and scars
- With our illusions and delusions,
- Our pride and false humility

Jesus gathers us together and looks at us and says –

All *that*..... that heavy stuff you carry around – If you don't mind, I'm going to take it from you.

You don't need it – and it is weighing you down.

I love you – and I want to take all this from you and set you free.

When he does, all *that* is covered with his blood as he hangs on the cross.

– and when he rises from the dead

– his wounds are still there,

but our burdens have been destroyed.

We are set free!

And Every Sunday,

the Lord Jesus who laid down his life for us

comes to us with his own body and blood

“Given and shed for you”.

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous agape love fills us and overflows for us!

...

Jesus has given us this holy supper so that we can abide in his love
– experiencing God week to week and day to day.

When Jesus spoke from the cross, “Father, forgive them” he addressed all people.

God’s *agape* love is personal, but not private.

It is meant to be shared.

As we experience God here to be gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love;

As we experience Jesus' forgiveness,

As we experience Jesus removing the handcuffs of our sins and unlocking the cell door of our own selfish making,

As we experience the deep deep love of God who knows exactly who we are and still transforms us into the image of Jesus,

So we are to love others

so that in relationship with us,

they also experience God as loving and merciful.

Jesus challenges us, his beloved disciples, – by election and special appointment – to go and bear fruit that will last.

Let us seize the opportunities God *will* give us to love others as we are loved today by Jesus himself.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Within You Without You

We were talking about the space between us all
And the people who hide themselves behind a wall of illusion
Never glimpse the truth, then it's far too late, when they pass away
We were talking about the love we all could share
When we find it, to try our best to hold it there with our love
With our love, we could save the world, if they only knew

Try to realise it's all within yourself
No one else can make you change
And to see you're really only very small
And life flows on within you and without you

We were talking about the love that's gone so cold
And the people who gain the world and lose their soul
They don't know, they can't see, are you one of them?

When you've seen beyond yourself then you may find
Peace of mind is waiting there
And the time will come when you see we're all one
And life flows on within you and without you