

Valentine's Day Notes 2025

Our readings this week are concerned with the love of God. The first from John's Gospel is taken from Jesus' farewell address and prayer to his disciples – including us – before his arrest, trial and crucifixion. As we have noted in previous weeks, Jesus makes a direct connection between loving God and keeping God's commandments. Yet this should not be understood as something we do in our own strength. Rather, it is something that only becomes possible when God changes our hearts.

God does this by creating a relationship with us in Christ by the Spirit. We are invited into the relationship of love that the Father and Son have with each other through the Spirit. In that relationship of love, forgiveness and affirmation, we are gradually weaned off the false loves that hurt us and others – e.g. love of praise, fame, riches, glory etc – and turned towards love of God and neighbour.

Yet this leaves the issue of how we *know* that we are loved by God, how we know that this relationship of love exists and that we are part of it. Many answers could be given to this, but in our second reading Paul is quite clear. We know God loves us because he sent his Son to live, die, and rise again for us. The only categorical proof of God's love for us and for our world is seen in Jesus. We must look to Jesus for confirmation that God loves us, and not how our life is from one moment to the next.

John 15:9-17

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹² 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

1. Read these words of Jesus over to yourself. Which resonate most with you? Why?
2. Was there ever a time when you weren't chosen for something? How did it feel?
3. How does it feel to have been chosen by God to be loved by him?

Romans 5:1-8

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

4. Do you ever look for evidence that God loves you? Where might you look?
5. 'But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.' Where does Paul think God demonstrates his love for us?