

“God Proved Love!”

[The video, “*Life with God*” was shown.]

That video explained Jesus “came to show us what God is like.” So, we might wonder, “What is God like?” The video’s answer was “God’s mercy, love, willingness to sacrifice.” The creators of the video used three different ways to define what was only one Greek word in today’s Lectionary New Testament Epistle Reading. That word is Agape Love. It is a very special kind of love – it sacrifices, suffers, shows mercy, abounds in grace, and is a compassionate love. The video also shared Jesus had another purpose, “He came to show us reality as it was intended. A life lived in relationship with God through the cross.” I don’t know about you but to me those words talk about living in an agape love relationship with God based on Jesus demonstrating it in his death on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

The video didn’t stop there. It pointed out, “Jesus offers us the same kind of life.” That’s an acknowledgment that Jesus invites us to join him in the New Life in Christ – living the New Relationship with our Divine Parent as we agape love God, one another, and everyone else. Lifting up the importance of Jesus’ agape love filled life, the video continued, “He was rejected so we could be accepted. Jesus died so we could have life. The kind of life we were created to live.” What kind of life were we created to live? The video concluded, “A life in connection with God. God sacrificed His Only Son so we could experience forgiveness, purpose, love, grace. Life with God is not about a religion. It’s about a Relationship.”

As the sermon title suggests, God proved love! Indeed, through Jesus Christ, God proved the Divine Parent’s Agape Love for us. In case we needed proof of God’s Agape Love for all of humanity, God’s Only Son was sent into human history – into this world. Jesus epitomized agape love – suffering, sacrificial, merciful, and forgiving agape love. The Apostle Paul provided a partial description of how Christ did that in **verses 1-2a**, “***Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has brought us by faith into this experience of God’s grace, in which we now live.***” It is the New Faith Relationship with God that Paul wrote about when he said “we have been put right with God through faith.” The Apostle explained we have that relationship of “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul went on to reveal that this agape loving life – the New Life revealed and given to us as a call from our Savior comes with significant suffering and sacrifice. But, the author of the Letter to the Romans showed them a process they and we experience as we go through such hardship in our New Faith Relationship with God and New Life in Christ. He wrote in **verses 3-5**, “***We also boast of our troubles, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance brings God’s approval, and His approval creates hope. This hope does not disappoint us, for God has poured out His agape love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God’s gift to us.***” Consider some of the most important experiences you had with trouble or difficulties or hardships. Since you are receiving this message, it is safe to assume you endured them, at least to the present.

Most days, Margaret and I try to walk at the Vista Ridge Mall or another mall, if there is an errand we need to do there. We especially walk at the Vista Ridge Mall because it has two sets of steps, which are equal to two flights or stories each. We walk those two sets of steps four times each or the equivalent of 16 flights of steps. I have greater endurance for walking or mowing or other exercise because Margaret and I regularly walk those 16 flights of steps.

In a like fashion, our having to endure difficulties and hardships strengthens our endurance for such experiences. Consciously doing that as part of our Faith Relationship with God and our New Life in Christ means our spiritual, psychological, and emotional resources will be stronger, so we are often able to endure such troubles. Paul referred to this part of the process as receiving God's approval, which brings hope. That is especially the case, when we make our life in the faith community an integral part of our Faith Relationship with God and New Life in Christ. Hope is an important spiritual asset connected with living the agape loving New Life in Christ. Indeed, it does not disappoint us when we trust our Divine Parent's Agape Love has been poured out into our hearts through God's Gift of the Constant Presence of the Almighty through the Holy Spirit.

You or I might ask, "How can we have faith that our hope in God's Agape Love will be vindicated?" The author of the Letter to the Romans instinctively responded in **verses 6-8**, ***"For when we were still helpless, Christ died for the wicked at the time that God chose. It is a difficult thing for someone to die for a righteous person. It may even be that someone might dare to die for a good person. But God has shown us how much He agape loves us — it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!"*** God's Agape Love for us was proved by our Divine Parent's Only Son, Jesus Christ, dying to demonstrate God's Love for us and doing that when we clearly did not deserve it! Remember, Jesus explained this same truth about agape love to his disciples during his last night with them – the night he was betrayed and taken prisoner. Jesus said in **John 15:12-13**, ***"My commandment is this: agape love one another, just as I agape love you. The greatest agape love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them. And you are my friends if you do what I command you."*** The agape loving death of God's Son proves God's Agape Love for us! We are Jesus' and God's friends – in the agape loving New Faith Relationship with God and living the New Life in Christ.

Indeed, the Apostle made the same point in **verses 10-11**, ***"We were God's enemies, but He made us His friends through the death of His Son. Now that we are God's friends, how much more will we be saved by Christ's life! But that is not all; we rejoice because of what God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has now made us God's friends."***

So, here we are, God's Friends! We have reason for joy, hope, and faith because God has proved the Divine Parent's Agape Love for us and all of humanity. Now, we move beyond receiving the Almighty's invitation to experience God's Grace and Agape Love in the New Faith Relationship with God. The Still Speaking God calls us to live agape love in the New Life in Christ, to trust or faith in God's Agape Love for all people as proved by the Death and Resurrection of God's Son, and to face and endure our troubles with hope and God's Agape Love under the power of God's Holy Spirit. Amen.