

6 Sunday of Easter, A

In the Broadway musical, “My Fair Lady,” there is a lively little chorus that starts out: “Words, words, words, I’m just sick of words,” and then the female vocalist sings:

“Don’t talk of stars burning above; if you are in love, show me.

Have not your lips longed for my touch? Don’t say how much - show me.

Don’t talk of love lasting through time; make me no undying vow - show me now.

Sing me no song; read me no rhyme; don’t waste my time - show me.

Don’t talk of June; don’t talk of fall; don’t talk at all - show me.

Don’t wait until wrinkles of time pop out all over my brow - show me now.”

When Liza Doolittle sang that song, I am confident that she was not thinking of our gospel reading for today. But when I read the reading I thought of the song, because the title fits – “If You are In Love, Show Me.” In essence that is what Jesus was saying to his disciples, only he said it like this: “He who obeys the commandments he has from me is the man who loves me.”

What does it mean to love Jesus? Most of us would probably like to think we do, but what does it mean? Several years ago there was a popular bumper sticker that could be seen on cars all across America. It said, “Honk; if you love Jesus.” I am reluctant to accept that invitation. I think that it might be too much room for misunderstanding. The driver of the other car may forget the sticker and take our honk as a signal of impatience. But even if the driver remember about the sticker and made the connection, honking a horn still would not say much about our love for the Lord. That is just too easy. In fact, saying the words, “I love Jesus,” is also too easy. Almost every time I hear that sentence, I find myself wondering what it means.

Now, if that sounds a bit too skeptical for someone here, I hope you will forgive me. But I am inclined to think that Jesus may have felt somewhat the same way. He never seemed to put much stock in verbal declarations of devotion. Instead, he was always linking love to action; and if the action was not there, he cared very little for the words.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that it is meaningless or shallow for husbands and wives to say, "I love you." Those three little words, when spoken with sincerity, can change the color of an entire day. All of us should probably use them more often. I am simply saying that actions speak louder than words. It is almost an insult to tell someone of your love unless you show that love in the things you do. This is true especially in matters of religion. It means absolutely nothing for you and me to speak of our love for the Lord unless we translate those words into deeds.

And that raises another question, namely this: What can you and I possibly do that will tell the Lord of our love for him? A husband can show his love to his wife with flowers or any number of thoughtful deeds. Parents can show their love to their children by spending time with them. Children can show their love to parents by helping with household everyday jobs. You and I, quite obviously, cannot do such things for the Lord; so what can we do that will speak to him of our love?

In our reading, he said we can obey his commandments. We can start with the Ten Commandments, but we cannot stop there. The Pharisees took great pride in obeying those ancient laws, yet they made no pretense of loving Jesus. They, in fact, hated him and did everything they could to discredit him. So if you and I would show our love for the Lord by obeying his commandments, we must go beyond the moral laws of the Old Testament.

I suspect that Jesus specifically had in mind what he called “a new commandment.” He had given it to his disciples at the last supper. It wasn’t very long or complicated, but it was very challenging. Here is what he said: “I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.”

Brothers and Sisters, I think that means that there is only one way that we can show our love for the Lord, and that is by loving one another. What else can we do? What have we got that he needs now?

If we had been the innkeeper in Bethlehem, we could have made room for his mother and given him a decent place to be born. If we had been the Samaritan woman by Jacobs well, we could have given him a drink of water. If we had been the boy with the few loaves and the fish, we could have given him our lunch that he might use it to feed the hungry crowd. If we had been the landlord in Jerusalem, we could have loaned him that upper room that he might eat the Passover with his disciples. If we had been Simon of Cyrene, we could have carried his cross. If we had been Joseph of Arimathea, we could have loaned him our tomb.

But this is another day and another time. He is no longer with us visibly present. He needs none of those things now. So what can we do for him, what can we give directly to him as a sign of our love. The answer is nothing. You and I hold in our hands not one thing that he needs.

For you and me, there is only one way that we can show our love for the Lord, and that is by loving people. No other opportunity is open to us - but we don’t need any other. That one is enough and more than enough. Opportunities abound on every side for us to tell the Lord of our love. We don’t have to talk about it. In fact, it will probably be better if we don’t talk about it too much.

Just find someone who is hungry and feed him. Find someone who is lonely and befriend him. Find someone in sorrow and let him know you care. Find someone who is discouraged, and loan him a little of your courage until he can build some of his own.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

What does it mean to love Jesus? At the bottom line, it means loving and helping people. And unless it translates into practical things like we have just mentioned, I seriously doubt it means anything, especially not to Jesus. I think our Lord might agree with Liza Doolittle: “Words, words, words, I’m just sick of words. If you are in love, show me.” **Amen.**