

**“Summer of Serving”**  
**Sermon for Sunday, April 22, 2018**

**SCRIPTURE: 1 John 3:16-24 (unison)** Pastor: The word of God for the people of God.

Gary Chapman wrote a book entitled “The Five Love Languages” that has been on the *New York Times* bestseller list since August 2009. It is intended to be a help book for couples and marriages, but I think it has some relevance for all relationships. Chapman proposes that there are five different ways that folks best offer and receive love... and we are not all the same.

The five different “love languages” that Chapman proposes are:

- Receiving gifts
- Quality time
- Words of affirmation
- Acts of service (devotion)
- Physical Touch

If you look at this list, which one of these five “languages” makes you feel most loved? In relationships, this can matter because if one partner best expresses love by “doing things... acts of service... like: I washed your car for you!” but their partner feels most loved through words of affirmation like “I am so proud of you!” or “You make me so happy!” then there can be a disconnect.

For us to love the other person, we need to “speak” through their love language. Chapman suggests that one of the ways we can determine another person’s love language is by observing what they do because typically a person will express love most often via their own primary love language. By watching the way our partner expresses love, we can get a clue to how we might best express love in the language that best receive.

Looking at the list... what do you think is your primary “love language”?  
Here’s a question: What do you think is God’s primary love language?

**The writer of 1 John offers some counsel on the nature of love, perhaps giving a clue as to how Christ expects us to express love.**

*How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s good and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (1 John 3:17-18)*

“Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” I don’t think John is suggesting that we never use our words to express love, but I DO think he is saying that talk can be cheap.

Jesus Christ was the incarnational (“in the flesh”) presence of God.

Jesus was the “in the flesh” Word of God. Jesus was God “with skin on”.

“Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”

**Jesus demonstrated by his life and death that we are called to put our faith into action through acts of love—and then he put an interesting “twist” on our acts of love. Hear said:**

*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?  
For even sinners love those who love them.  
If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?  
For even sinners do the same.  
But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.  
(Luke 6:32-33)*

**This past Monday, I attended the Yom HaShoah service at Achduth Vesholom Temple... a service of remembrance of the Holocaust.**

How can love let this happen?

Then this week I met a new ministry colleague for coffee. I suggested that we meet at Starbucks downtown. She is African-American. It occurred to me as I was driving there that perhaps my suggestion of Starbucks had been insensitive in light of the recent news of the arrest of two African-American young men at a Starbucks. During our conversation, I shared that I felt bad if I had been insensitive to the choice of a meeting place. And do you know what she said: “I got here a little early and when I didn’t see you, I thought I better buy something quick, just in case!”

How can love let this happen?

The only way we can combat HATRED is with LOVE.

Putting our LOVE into action is the most profound way to change the world.

Putting our LOVE into action is the most profound way that we can help others.

Putting our LOVE into action is the most profound way for us to tell others about our Jesus!

I am challenging this congregation to put our faith into acts of LOVE.

**This morning you received a heart attached to your worship bulletin.**

This morning is the kick-off of a congregation-wide ministry that we are calling “Summer of Serving: 2000 Acts of Service”. Each Sunday, for 14 Sundays, you will receive a heart attached to your bulletin and it is intended to be a reminder that challenges you to perform an act of love—big or small—for someone else during the coming week. Then you are invited to write the act and your name on the heart--bring it back the following Sunday—and put it in the offering plate. The hearts returned will be attached to streamers that will be hanging between the sanctuary and the fellowship hall... creating a moving, paper sculpture of love. The goal is to have at least 2000 paper hearts on our moving sculpture! Our Outreach Chair Bill Townsend thinks you will do more than that!

This is not about pride... or patting ourselves on the back.

But it is about creating a visual reminder of the power of love and the power of love to change the world.

We can all do something... what you do will be up to you!

Maybe you reach out to a neighbor... or offer a kindness to a stranger.

Maybe you will do something for someone you know, but I hope you will consider getting out into the world.

**Many of the hearts will represent individual acts of love. But maybe your act of love could include others.**

Yard work... home repair... working with a local agency...

If your act of love would be an opportunity for others to join you, email your project to Anna Zartman (or call the church office) with your name, contact info and a brief description of your act of love. She will put it on our "Summer of Serving: 2000 Acts of Love" bulletin board for all to see so they can contact you.

Group acts of love will also be listed in the worship bulletin.

And we already have one: Dan Daniels will coordinate volunteers for the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Food Drive sponsored by Associated Churches. Postal carriers will be picking up donations of non-perishables and Associated Churches will need volunteers at eight different sites to receive and organize the donations on Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. Look for more info on the bulletin board and in your worship bulletin next Sunday and make that your act of love for that week. The Outreach Committee will be offering possibilities for you as well on some Sundays this summer.

2000 Acts of Love by July 29<sup>th</sup>... can we do it... will we do it?

Let us pray...