

## SERMON – TRINITY SUNDAY

### **‘Christian Fellowship: From the ‘Holy Kiss’ to Contemporary Expressions of Love in Christ**

There are many, many heart-warming images that we could sit here and discuss this morning. One of the most heart warming, heart melting images or photographs that imprints our memory every time we behold it, is the greeting of two babies who are just learning to walk. It is even more captivating when they try to hug and plant a kiss. Their greeting is self-less, self-giving, unconditional, filled with charm, purity, and goodness. It is electrifying—sending shivers all over. It is sweet and caring. It is lovely and it really takes our breath away. Babies are so divine! This sight leaves us so animated!

Is it any wonder then that Jesus would say ‘suffer little children, and bid them to come to me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven’<sup>1</sup>

And talking about the kingdom of heaven, we are all children in this kingdom of heaven, God’s kingdom. We too are expected to greet and care for one another in ways like these two babies—selfless, self-giving, and pure in thoughts and ways. We as adults in the kingdom are expected to lead out and demonstrate these good traits. The scriptures<sup>2</sup> for Trinity Sunday, reveal the all-encompassing love of God. They pull us right into this arena of love and oneness in Christ, which these two babies demonstrate before our very eyes. They got it! Post it on Instagram and Tik Tok! Drop the mike! They got it!

And so, I invite us to reflect on this theme this morning - **‘Christian Fellowship: From the ‘Holy Kiss’ to Contemporary Expressions of Love in Christ.’**

Paul is the one we hear this morning, talking about greeting each other with a ‘holy kiss.’ Have you ever noticed that the bible characters always use the simple things around them to tell their stories? Jesus is the prime example: he used the corm, the fig tree, the fishing boat, the storm, the farming language, the bread – he used them to pivot to the things of the divine. A parable – an earthly story with a divine and heavenly meaning.

So here Paul uses a traditional form and imagery of greeting in the early Christian community to make a point of brotherly and sisterly love in Christ. Nothing else could be so endearing in the sight of God, more than this ‘holy greeting,’ this ‘holy kiss.’ In it there is acceptance and inclusivity for who you are, knowing whose you are. In it there are the unspoken words ‘I love you with the love of the Lord.’ In such a greeting we make the profound statement that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord. It is an unspoken declaration that we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord! In this greeting, demonstrated in the eyes of all to see in this sacred space, we are acknowledging that we are indeed in one accord. Go ahead therefore and greet each other, with a holy kiss!

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 19:14

<sup>2</sup> [https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=142#hebrew\\_reading](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/texts.php?id=142#hebrew_reading)

This was a call out to the brethren by Paul, asking them to do something different. Go beyond your normal cultural practice among family and friends. Lift that greeting to a higher standard because you are now bound together with one common thread – THE LOVE OF THE TRIUNE GOD – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are a part of the whole people of God in ‘Christian Fellowship one to the other; and so we can express this love in several ways, from the ‘Holy Kiss’ to Contemporary Expressions of Love.

With this all encompassing, unconditional love spread abroad in our hearts, and with this fresh anointing of the Pentecost fire, of the Holy Spirit, Paul’s words to us are for us to recognize that this greeting of one another with a ‘holy kiss’ takes on for us, a deeper spiritual meaning. This historical gesture in the faith community then, signified their bond in Christ and was seen as an expression of mutual affection and goodwill – a Christian legacy which has been passed down to us today.

In the New Testament, the ‘holy kiss’ is mentioned in several passages, such as Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and 1 Peter 5:14. These verses encourage believers to greet one another with a holy kiss as a sign of their shared faith and love. The more this is practiced, it concretises God’s love and remains as a clear sign of unity and love within the community of believers.

The readings therefore have this thread of love running through all of them beginning with God’s love by bringing creation into being; God’s love by sending Jesus and God’s love by allowing for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all of us, in one accord.

As a church, this unity is demonstrated each week in our gathering in community, in the breaking the word, in the Greeting of Peace – maybe still with a holy kiss in our bubbles (since covid-19), a side hug, a hand shake, a wave and a smile of unity – singing song like ‘Let us greet each other in Jesus’ Name, Let us tell them that we love them in Jesus’ Name, Tell them we can work together in Jesus’ Name, Everybody smile, Jesus loves you.’ And following, with joy in our hearts we march up as soldiers of the King, as witnesses, publicly declaring what we believe and kneel at the chancel rail to drink from the one cup in remembrance of the one who died for us!

This is the Trinity that we have all signed up for and signed into, until our life’s end, because this is love my friends, spread abroad in our hearts through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is love! This emphasis in showing affection and building strong bonds of relationships among believers remains an important aspect of our Christian fellowship and ought to be lived out in our daily lives and under all circumstances.

Finally, with this love of God spread abroad in our hearts, embodied through our baptismal vows, God through the words of Jesus Christ, calls us and commissions us. This we know as the Great Commission. Like the disciples, we too are given all authority in heaven and on earth – to spread this love to others in tangible and in intangible ways, and to invite them into the kingdom of God - ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. Our church is here to help to equip you how in how to do this. If you are so moved and want to do more go to your priest, come to me and let’s talk about it.

The final thing that Jesus said to the disciple and says to us today is so profound, ‘And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ What a lovely thing to say. What an assurance.

Would you just lay your hand on your heart now and say 3 times:

‘Thank you, Father God, for being with me always’

‘Thank you, Holy Spirit, for being with me always’

‘Thank you, Jesus, for being with me always.’

That’s the Trinity right there. This is the Trinity in which we live and move and have our being my friend. This is it! A love expressed purely before our very eyes through two babies greeting each other and which simply takes our breath away. This is the Trinity in which we live and move and have our being.

As you continue to reflect on the topic ‘**Christian Fellowship: From the 'Holy Kiss' to Contemporary Expressions of Love in Christ**’, may you leave here this day basking in the love of our Triune God and **eager** to share with someone, anyone, these wonderful caring words of Jesus ‘...I am with you always, to the end of the age’ – always and forever, in every situation, to the end of the age – I am with you, always!

Amen!