



Daily Faith Practices

Sunday, August 28-September 3 (A) – Romans 12:9-21

Focus: *A Genuine Love*

word of life

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection” (Romans 12:9-10 NRSV)

Read Romans 12:9-21

In the reading for today from the 12th chapter of Romans, Paul continues to emphasize the ways in which a faithful follower of Christ lives out and expresses the unmerited grace of God in his/her own life. The verses are a succinct list of quick exhortations to the Christian community, with seemingly little to connect them together as one body. The sinews, however, are found in the first verse of today’s reading: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection” (Romans 12:9-10 NRSV) Love is the overarching theme.

1. *Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Matthew 22:36-40, and Romans 13:8-10. What do these passages say about the significance of love?*

It’s interesting to note that Paul uses two different Greek words for *love* in these verses. In Romans 12:9 the word *agape* is used. *Agape* is used to describe God’s love for us—a selfless, sacrificial love offered freely with no thought of a response. In verse 10, the word used is *phileo*—familial love found in community. Once again for Paul, ethical living—how we live in community—is an outpoured response to the love of God.

2. *What is the significance of the two different words used by Paul for love?*

The remainder of the chapter gives concrete examples of what it means to live a genuine love—with those both within and those outside the community of faith.

3. *Read verses 11-18 of Romans 12. Pause after each verse and answer these two questions:*
 - a. *What does this mean for how we live faithfully with those inside the faith community?*
 - b. *What does this mean for how we live faithfully with those outside the faith community?*

Paul gives concrete examples of living a life transformed by the grace of God. Earlier in chapter 12, he writes, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2 NRSV) Now in the verses assigned for today’s reading, we learn what the transformed life looks like. It is a life of love, compassion, patience, humility, kindness and generosity.

The transformed life is to be evident even in relationships with our enemies. “If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink” (Romans 12:20 NRSV) We hear echoes of Jesus’ call to love our enemies—to go the extra mile in our care for them. In doing so, the enemy is put to shame: “... for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” (Romans 12:20 NRSV)

All of these exhortations are life patterns that live out the call first mentioned—to let love be genuine, to live a life transformed by the grace and mercy of God, to offer one’s life as “...a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1 NRSV) Such a life is in response to the grace and love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

4. *Describe genuine love.*

5. *What is the opposite of genuine love?*

word among us

The salesperson was giving his usual sales talk to the couple. It was their first new car purchase. “Let me point out some of the amenities that comes with this car.” He opened the door, touched the seat, and said, “Aahhh! Genuine hand-crafted leather!”

The coach was recruiting high school players for her university basketball teams. As she scouted the game in which a top-level recruit was playing, she eagerly got on her cellphone and called her staff. “Save a scholarship for her,” the coach said of the player, “She’s the real deal.”

The family was gathered around the dinner table. After the family prayer, the young father leapt up to his feet in order to be the first to reach the bowl of mashed potatoes. “You can’t beat genuine mashed potatoes. It doesn’t get any better than this!”

The doctor patiently answered all the couple’s questions. She knew she had other patients waiting, but she also knew that the decision facing this family was a significant one. After the doctor finished and left the room, the man looked at his wife and said, “I think she genuinely cares.”

1. *Think of other examples of someone/something that is genuine.*
2. *What makes them genuine?*

“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection . . .” (Romans 12:9-10 NRSV) The word translated as *genuine* in the Greek is *anupokritos*. The last part of the word is the word *hypocrite*; the prefix *an* means *without*.

Paul exhorts the congregation in Rome (and Christians of all time and places) to live a love that is genuine, authentic, sincere, without hypocrisy, real—to live and love authentically. How often do we say, “I’ll pray for you” or “We’ll keep in touch” and we fail to do so? How often do we smile while someone is talking but don’t really listen to what they are saying? It is a challenge to love genuinely.

3. *Why is it so difficult to genuinely love?*

Paul calls us to love genuinely in response to the pure, genuine love of God for us. The long-beloved camp song says it well: “And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.”

faith practice in daily life

Serve all people, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ

We are called as Christians to love and serve in real, authentic, genuine ways. We follow the example of Jesus Christ, who served and loved and gave his life that we might know the real love of God. As we strive to live and love faithfully, may it be said of us, “They are the real deal!”

4. *How might you love and serve in real, authentic, and genuine ways during the coming week?*

Prayer

Create in us clean hearts, O God, so that our love for you and for others may always be genuine, authentic, and true. Amen

last word

Be authentic and genuine in your relationships this week.