

From Our Pastor – June 2018

COMPASSIONATE LOVE

Dear Sun City Church Family,

I stand amazed at the compassion of Jesus Christ!

Compassion means, literally, to feel with another person, or to share someone's passion or pain. Compassion is what God did in becoming one of us, not merely taking upon Himself human flesh and organs, but also taking into Himself human sorrows and agonies.

It is the nature of love to step beyond the supposed comfort of self-centeredness to share in the sorrows of another—and divine love takes such sharing to the fullest. Kris Vallotton puts it this way: "You can sacrifice and not love, but you cannot love and not sacrifice." Jesus Christ clearly loved us and sacrificed for us.

The pictorial Chinese language has a term for the kind of love that shares the agony of another. Philip Yancey and Dr. Paul Brand explain, "In the character that expresses the highest kind of love, symbols for love and pain are brushed on top of each other to form a word like 'pain-love.' Thus a mother 'pain-likes' her child. She pours out her whole being on the child's behalf. In essence God showed pain-love to creation by emptying Himself and joining us in the Incarnation."

Compassion—genuine care—always involves at least some level of coming alongside of another and sharing in the pain of another.

The frightening and the wonderful nature of our faith is that Christ calls us to join Him in living with compassion toward others.

In *Philippians 3:10* Paul shares something that I scratched my head over for years until I came to understand that the nature of love is to share in the sorrows of another. Paul says, "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death." Nobody desires to suffer merely for the sake of suffering. Indeed, Paul tells the Corinthians that he prayed repeatedly for God to take away from him a "thorn" in his flesh. Paul did not want suffering any more than the rest of us do. But what he truly longed for was to become like Christ even though that would involve sharing in the sufferings of Christ for God continues to care for those who are hurting and God chooses to do that through us.

Paul spells this out in *Ephesians 5:1-2*: "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

The nature of our faith is that we are called to come alongside others—even to share in the

pain and sorrow of others—out of love because Christ loves each of us.

I look forward to joining you soon, and I look forward to sharing with you in your joys and struggles as we seek to live out the love of Christ in Sun City (or wherever you find yourself during the summer months).

(Your soon to be) Pastor Tom