

Children's Message  
10.8.06

Good morning.

Have you ever had someone tell you that you have to have a good relationship with God? That you need to love God? That you need to show God all of that love? I am sure that you have- because even I have told you that. But that's kind of tricky when you really think about it. To have a relationship with God, to show God love- when God is in heaven? Tricky, it seems really tricky. But it's easy to show love to people. People are right here, on earth with us. We can do all sorts of things to show people love.

Let me tell you a little story about a boy named Sherman. It was a cold, lonely day in the middle of winter and Sherman found himself wondering about what love really is. He thought to himself, "No one has ever really told me what love is. I'm going to go ask a few people to see if they might know." So, Sherman threw on his coat and ran out the door.

His 1<sup>st</sup> stop was old Mrs. Olsen, down the block. "Can you tell me what love is?" he asked. "No, not really," she replied. Then she noticed that he was blowing on his hands. "Your hands must be freezing, Sherman. I have an extra pair of mittens- let me get them for you." Sherman thanked her as he left, though he was disappointed that she hadn't answered his question.

Mr. Green lived 2 doors down from Mrs. Olsen. "Can you tell me what love is?" Sherman asked as soon as he stepped inside. "Not sure I can," came the response. Sherman sighed. Mr. Green, who was an artist, said, "You really like watching me work, don't you Sherman?" The boy nodded enthusiastically. "Then let me show you something. What's your favorite animal?" Sherman said that he loved raccoons. So, Mr. Green showed Sherman how to draw a raccoon, and when he left, Sherman was holding a pretty good picture of a plump raccoon that he had drawn himself. But he still didn't have an answer to his question.

His next stop was the Tilsons. "Can you tell me what love is?" Sherman inquired. Mrs. Tilson said, "I don't think we can tell you. But maybe we could just sit down and share a small piece of pie together. Small enough that it won't spoil your dinner. You do look hungry, Sherman." Sherman admitted that he was very hungry. So, they shared apple pie and had nice visit. But still, no answer to his question.

Finally, Sherman stopped by the home of his friend, Jerome. "I've asked all the grown-ups what love is. They don't have a clue. Can you tell me Jerome?" But all Jerome said was, "You know I missed having you come over earlier this week when you were sick, can you stay and play for a little while?" So he did.

When Sherman arrived back home, he flopped down on the sofa and told his mother about his visits and he said, "I've asked everyone else. I might as well ask you. Can you tell me what love is?" She said, "Maybe I can. Let me tell about a little boy who went visiting his neighbors to ask the exact same question. One of his neighbors gave the boy mittens so his hands wouldn't get cold, another taught the child a new skill, another offered the child food, and finally another offered the child friendship. I think that through all of the things the neighbors did, the child really did get an answer to his question."

When people ask Jesus questions about how to love God, Jesus often answered them with actions (like Sherman's neighbors) or with stories, called parables (like Sherman's mother.) There is a part in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus tells us that when we do something good for another person; like when we cloth a person with no clothes, feed a hungry person, take care of a sick person; then we also do it for God. So, you see, it's not really that tricky at all to love God- all we have to do is love one another.