

Shows Initiative and Plays Well With Others

May 21, 2006

(Easter 6 - Year B)

1 John 4: 7-21

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

When kids are in pre-school or in kindergarten, like at a school like St. Alban's School, the teacher and parents meet together for the annual parent/teacher conference.

At a parent/teacher conference, the teacher has usually completed an evaluation form that the teacher discusses with the parent.

Several different boxes on the student's evaluation form are checked or not checked based upon the child's performance and behavior in the classroom.

One of the categories is:

"Plays well with others."

Another category is:

"Shows initiative."

As adults in the work world, we also receive similar evaluations.

The exception is that these evaluations do not occur during a parent/teacher conference,

But rather, the evaluations occur during the annual performance review.

The boxes on the form to be checked are about the same.

There is usually a category that says:

"Shows initiative"

But, the category

"Plays well with others" might be worded as

"Is a team player."

In the First Epistle of John, the writer of the epistle tells us about the nature of love.

In this Letter of John, we hear that God not only shows initiative, but

that God also plays well with others.

Many of us are familiar with First Corinthians 13, that famous chapter of scripture about love that is read at many weddings.

The passage goes:

“Love is patient, love is kind.

Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.”

But, in the First Epistle of John, John gives us a little different picture of love than what we hear about in First Corinthians.

In First John, we hear that:

“God is love.”

Then, the letter goes on to say:

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son...for our sins.”

Let me say that again:

“This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.”

About 5 or 6 years ago, I was flipping through the TV channels using the remote control.

I stopped for a moment at the Trinity Broadcasting Network, also known as TBN.

On TBN was one of those schmaltzy, over-the-top Christian TV shows.

I don't remember the name of the show, but it is that show where guests sit in these huge gilded gold chairs, and women with big hair and men in white suits talk about their faith in Jesus Christ.

I must admit that, occasionally, I will watch these shows, for the entertainment value, if nothing else.

But on this night when I was flipping channels, the actress Dyan Cannon was on the show, talking about her faith.

Dyan Cannon used to be married to Cary Grant and has been in numerous movies and TV shows.

On this TV show, she was telling her faith story and how she had a conversion experience to Christianity.

Dyan Cannon was telling about how she now hosts a weekly gathering of Christians in the middle of Hollywood, for people in the film

industry.

The name of the gathering is:
God's Party.

Anyway, on this TV show I was watching, Dyan Cannon was talking
about God's love.

And, she said that the verse in Scripture that changed in her life was one
of the very same verses from First John that we read as our Epistle
this morning here at St. Alban's.

The verse that changed Dyan Cannon's life was:

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

As Dyan Cannon gave her testimony on TV, tears began pouring down
her cheeks,

And, I must admit that I was very moved as well.

This actress told that this verse from First John changed her life because
it was only after reading this verse that she realized that God loved
her first,

That God loved her first before she ever had to love God back.

God loved her first.

As I watched this show, I was touched by Dyan Cannon's story,

And I believe that I also had a small conversion experience.

For, now, I *also* understood that God *always* takes the initiative and
makes a move toward us.

God loves us *first*, before we make any move toward God.

It doesn't matter if we love God or believe in God,

God loves us *first*.

God shows initiative.

And God not only shows initiative,

But God also plays well with others.

The writer of First John says that because God loved us first,

Because God always shows initiative,

God sent his Son to us.

And this Son of God, this Jesus, plays well with others.

Jesus loves us, heals us, and forgives us.
Jesus welcomes us with open arms.
Jesus is a team player.
Jesus takes turns on the playground.
Jesus shares his toys.
Jesus gives us gifts, gifts such as the Holy Spirit, offering us new life.
Jesus plays well with others.

For, Jesus shows us that,
Yes, God is love.
Jesus shows us that God shows initiative and that God plays well with others.

This picture of love that we receive from the First Epistle of John does not just show us a picture of God.
The First Epistle of John also gives us a picture of how *we* are to be *with others*.

We are to imitate God,
We are to make the first move and love each other, showing initiative and playing well with others.
For Scripture says:
“Those who do not love a brother or a sister whom they *have* seen, cannot love God whom they have *not* seen.”

What brother or sister in your life do *you* need to play well with?
Who in your life do *you* need to show initiative to?

Do you have an old friend whom you have had a falling out with?
Then, show some initiative and pick up the phone and give her a call.

Are you currently working with someone who gets on your nerves?
Then, play well with others and try to put yourself in his shoes.

Love is not some corny concept that is portrayed on the Lifetime Channel.
Love is showing initiative and playing well with others, even with those

who seem quite unlovable.

Desmond Tutu received the prestigious Union Medal from the Union Theological Seminary in New York a few months ago.

In his acceptance speech, Desmond Tutu said:

“God does not love me because I am loveable;
I am loveable only and precisely because God loves me.”

Thank God that we are not loved because we are lovable,
Because some times we do not act very lovable.
But we are loved because God takes the initiative and loves us first.

Yet, with that love of God comes a responsibility, a responsibility to
love other people.

A responsibility to love those who are hard to love, by being patient and
kind.

In the words of the Letter of John:

“Beloved, since God loves us so much, [then] we also ought to love one
another.

[For] those who say, ‘I love God’ and hate their brothers and sisters, are
liars.”

Beloved, don’t be a liar.

Love the brothers and sisters whom you *can* see.

Then, you will love the God whom you *cannot* see.

For when Jesus comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
You will want to have at least two boxes checked on your evaluation
form:

TShows Initiative

TPlays Well with Others.

AMEN.

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