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April 15, 2018
Intimacy: in-to-me-i-see
1 John 4:7-16

A young pastor was once asked to preach a sermon on **sex**. Being somewhat reserved he found himself embarrassed when he came to write the word “sex” in his notes while preparing his sermon. **To remove** this discomfort he decided to simply put the letter “S” wherever the word “**sex**” was to be used.

During his preparation the young pastor’s wife came in and looked over his shoulder. She noticed the letter “S” planted liberally throughout the text and asked him what the topic for the sermon was. Embarrassed even to tell his wife the topic the young pastor said, “s...s...**sailing!** That’s what the sermon’s about, **sailing!**”

His wife thought it a bit **odd** of a topic for a sermon, but guessed sailing might form a good analogy to the Christian life. Come Sunday, the young pastor’s wife was sick with the flu and missed church. Her husband, however, preached a **terrific sermon!** Although he started nervously he warmed to the topic as the sermon progressed and handled the matter most tactfully and helpfully.

During the following week a member of the congregation was speaking to the young pastor’s wife. “**Oh**, your husband preached a beautiful sermon last Sunday. He handled a difficult topic most sensibly and I found what he had to say rather helpful.”

“Well, that’s a **surprise!**” said the young pastor’s wife. “I’m afraid I didn’t think he’d be of much help to anybody. After all, he’s only ever done it twice, and **both times he went right overboard!**”

Friends, last week, Agape Love was the topic. This week, as a part of the sermon series on love, the teaching is on Eros Love. An aspect of love that **is incredibly significant (pause, smile).**

Our own Senior Minister, The Reverend Dale Rosenberger wrote a book about it entitled: *Sex and the Spirit: The Romance of Heaven and Earth*. **Think about it**, bedside’s our human instinct for survival the second **most powerful** instinct we possess is our **sexuality**.

Now while sex in itself is an important topic -- today I want us to go **deeper into the conversation** regarding Romantic Love and get to the low hanging fruit of **HEALTHY** Eros Love which is **intimacy (pause)**... Or better yet, as I have broken it down in the sermon title: intimacy means **in - to - me - I - see (repeat) (slow and pause)**.

Church intimacy is being **100%** authentically **known** by another human being. By far this is the **MOST** difficult challenge many of us face in our romantic relationships. Having the willingness to be exposed and vulnerable with our significant other is **HARD!**

We come up against **several road blocks** with intimacy because whether consciously or subconsciously we allow the alarming chatter of the committees in our brain to say things like: "If only he/she really knew me" or "I'm not worthy of this kind of love".

We get blindsided by the fear of rejection **in both** short-term and long-term relationships. In case you didn't know, the fear of rejection is **paralyzing (pause)!** This overwhelming fear makes sense because in time life has a way of injuring our hearts in more ways than one.

If some stranger hurts us **who care's!** But if the person who you've shared your body with, or have history with, or potentially have a family with hurts you than God knows the pain that accompanies that is just too much to bear (pause).... **The lacerations and wounds of our hearts can ONLY become an asset when God's needle of love sows it back together!**

Without GOD'S **incarnate** love we can't fully experience intimacy... But as Christians, we **KNOW** God's incarnate love because we are followers of Jesus, giving each of us a bridge to Health Eros love.

Here are two **Fundamental Propositions** of how this love is incarnate:

1) That God is **an erotic** God ... in that he values WHAT IS ENFLESHED. He comes in the flesh to meet us where we are ... God entering this world as Jesus is evidence to affirm the essential goodness of creation and our material life.
This is incredible information...

Knowing that God is **NOT** some unreachable or inaccessible idea but rather God is the **FORCE** that lives within us igniting our intimacy with others ... **GOD IS PERSONAL, POWERFUL AND PRESENT** and HIS Spirit is right in front of us (Hold hands in front of you)....

2) That God is **an sensual** God ... in that he is the heartbeat of the ENERGY that connects, unites, and reconciles. I can't speak for everyone but out of all my relationships in life when my wife and I are in a good place life is JUST BETTER!! What's that good ole saying: "Happy wife, happy life!" **It's SO TRUE!**

But here's the uncomfortable reality... I'm going to fail my wife. As a matter of fact, we ALL are going to fail our partners OVER AND OVER AND OVER again... But God doesn't want our failures to consume us... **He wants us to rise above them (pause)!!!**
How do I know this?? Because we just celebrated Good Friday and Easter! Jesus was nailed and murdered on a piece of wood and left there to die... Would you consider that **a failure?**

Three days later he **ROSE FROM THE DEAD** showing himself to his disciples!! Would you consider that rising above?

In the book of Isaiah, the prophet is preaching about Jesus way before he came to earth... People were failing and living in Darkness all around him but he knew with the Power of God overcoming failure, shortcomings and darkness was ALWAYS AN OPTION!

The Bible says in the book of Isaiah chapter 60:

“Rise up and shine, for your light has come. The shining-greatness of the Lord has risen upon you. For see, darkness will cover the earth. Much darkness will cover the people. **But the Lord will rise upon you**, and His shining-greatness will be seen upon you.

We can't miss the fact that WE SERVE GOD who is highly invested in the solution and NOT the problem! So whatever the status of your Eros Relationship is the invitation from God is that He wants it to be **Alive, Abundant and AMAZING!!!**

Friends God's love is SO patient; SO kind; it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

The EROS Love of God is apart of the image we were made in which means we should accept, celebrate, and enjoy the God given beauty of our sexuality.

Our sexuality is a gift from God and teaching the next generations the importance of how valuable their bodies are is imperative **if** as parents, adults, and leaders we want what is best for them!!!

Such inspirational truth comes right from the pages of our Bible. It is a book that is filled with emotions and feelings bringing to life the very nature of who we are as human beings. Scripture teaches us how to **live**, how to **commit** and how **to love** another person with all of our heart, mind and soul. Scripture reveals to us that God is most **certainly** relational (Father, Son, and Spirit) and because He has made us in His image, He has created us as relational beings as well. This is **exactly** why love is the most powerful virtue the human family experiences in life **because** "God is Love!" 1 John 4:8.

And this type of God's love, Eros love, can take a person's world from black and white and turn it into the **MOST VIBRANT OF COLORS! Is it risky? You better believe it...**

Intimacy is loaded with passions and insecurities. This is exactly why preaching about it is essential and the best way to preach about it is to use real life situations.

And in all the life situations regarding Eros Love I've encountered, I'm motivated to conclude there are negative thoughts that will ultimately destroy your relationship if they go unchecked:

Thoughts like: Comparing your partner to someone else

"If only he were more like Martha's husband." Or "My friend's wife does it like this why can't you do it like that too."

Thoughts like: Expecting your partner to know what you want

"They should know what I want." Or "They should know what to do."

And lastly, Thoughts like: Comparing your relationship to the beginning

Our culture is fixated on **microwave love** (PAUSE)... Quick, instant, and easy... Pop it in the microwave for 30 seconds and move on... This mindset **is destroying** the family model... And here's the thing THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS quick, instant, easy **love** ...

Healthy Eros Love needs to marinate **for hours** ... Slow Roast Cook **for days** ... And have enough left overs to **last a lifetime!!!**

This type of Love takes patience, years of energy and most of all mutual sacrifice (Long Pause).

According to John Gottman (pioneer and guru on healthy/intimate relationships), intimacy requires 4 things:

- 1) Friendship – **seeking** and finding time and energy for SHARED, MUTUALLY enjoyable activities.
- 2) Spirituality – **drawing** people closer around a shared commitment to service and healthy long-term wellbeing,
- 3) Communication – **desiring** to draw close by way of vulnerability, careful listening and positive regard.
- 4) Play/Sex – **making** space for playful fun where healthy pleasure/delight are freeing and satisfying.

Gottman's FOUR cornerstones to intimacy are great takeaways for ALL of us...

Eros love is like a fire burning in the woods at night if its contained **it is** beautiful! But if it gets out of control it can turn into chaos and destruction!

So, GO forth and unapologetically bring the low hanging fruit of intimacy into your love life.....

May it be so ... AMEN!

Sources: <http://storiesforpreaching.com>