



**Welcome to Unity's Interactive
Worship Service
Third Sunday of Advent Topic:
A Love That Frees
Power Point notes available at:
www.unityofbakersfield.org**

A Love That Frees



Jesus said, "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." –John 13:34

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What does that new commandment really mean? What kind of love did Jesus teach, display through his actions, and then ask us to express as well?

Could it be, like all his other teachings, that there was more to its meaning? What if it was not a love that called for us to bind one another together, but instead free one another to be an individualized expression of a love that frees, a love known as divine love?

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What if, as the Rev. Linda Martella-Whitsett in her article [Love Sets Us Free](#), a freeing love looks something like this:

1. "I care about you by first caring about myself, bringing the best of myself into our relationship. I promise that whatever I choose to do I do freely."
2. "I trust you to follow your dreams and choose your path without interference from me. I free you from my expectations, celebrating your pursuit of fulfillment in our own ways."

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3. "When you are struggling, I want you to know I care and I have confidence in your innate ability to discern, to choose your path through the challenges. I will do my best to stay centered and well, to support you without making your struggle mine."

4. "For love's freedom comes from its origin, which is divine. The love of God is a free-flowing, ever-flowing force arising from within and all around us."

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5. "The love of God is the love we experience and express in every encounter. The love of God is what we are. For divine love is my name and true nature: the love I am flows, the love I am allows, the love I am frees."



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A short story about love:

A rabbi and a soap maker went for a walk together. The soap maker said, "What good is love? Look at all the trouble and misery in the world, and after a thousand years of teaching about goodness, truth, and peace, and after all the prayers, sermons and teachings, where's the love? If love is good and true, why should this be?" The rabbi said nothing as they continued walking.

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As they walked along they passed a child playing in the gutter. The rabbi turned to the soap maker and said, "Look at that child. You say that soap makes people clean, but see the dirt on that youngster. Of what good is soap? With all the soap in the world, the child is still filthy. I wonder how effective soap is after all."

The soap maker protested and said, "But, Rabbi, soap can't do any good unless it is used."

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"Exactly," replied the rabbi. "So it is with love or any of the other gift's God has given us. It is ineffective unless it is applied and used."

Now that brings me to a story in the Bible that we have all heard many times before. It is one that is used many times to illustrate faith. But I believe it has even a deeper meaning, one that can be overlooked unless you really put yourself into the story by traveling back to the same place in time.

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Please join me as we take a journey back in time: the year is 30 AD and you're in the town of Capernaum. As a devoted Jew you are working hard to live by the Mosaic Law. You have seen and experienced pain and suffering under the rule of the Romans as they feed off the fruits of your labor. They give you no respect and stand ready to put you to death, if ordered to.

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Your family and friends have a hard time finding peace and justice at the hands of the Romans. They take what they want, do what they want, rule as they wish. Your love, if you still have some, is centered mostly on your family as you try to provide for them the best way you know how. Entering your town one day is a man called Jesus of Nazareth, and as the crowd gathers around him, you wonder what's going on?

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So you go over to see what the excitement is all about and this is what you find:

There is a Roman centurion facing Jesus, a Jew. Your mind races thinking, "Is he going to be arrested, what did he do, will he be killed, or just jailed?" But this is what you hear, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

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But the centurion answered him, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed."

When Jesus heard him, he marvelled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." -Matt 8:5-13

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A story of faith that demonstrates how a love that frees can be applied. So let's look at the story a bit closer:

1. How did the Centurion feel about coming to Jesus? What implications would there be for him to be asking a Jew for something? The words, "*I am not worthy to have you under my roof*" implied what?

2. The request by the Centurion showed that he had a great deal of love for his servant. Keep in mind that servants were property. So why the concern?

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3. The belief by the Centurion that Jesus, a Jew, had a power that could heal, crossed all social boundaries and caused him to seek Jesus out after all others options failed to heal his servant.

4. Did Jesus rebuke him, chastise him, refuse him? Did Jesus go into a long discourse about the evils and injustices that this leader of men inflicted upon the people they conquered?

NO!

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5. Jesus uses this opportunity to show that God's love had no boundaries, and is free and available to all.

6. The love expressed here by the Centurion, along with the belief that his servant could be healed, created for Jesus the occasion to demonstrate God's freeing love by healing the servant.

7. I think Jesus could have said, "Go, be it done for you as you have held in your heart, a belief and love that has no limits, no boundaries."

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8. Within this story we find the trinity of love as expressed and demonstrated time and time again during Jesus's ministry: Love God, Love Self, and Love Others.

By using the Jesus model for love, we can raise ourselves to the consciousness of God by practicing the power of love on our neighbors and on ourselves. When we become aligned in consciousness with God, we understand how divine love can free our relationships with others.

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Like Jesus, we find ourselves being able to forgive others and accept forgiveness for ourselves. As someone once said, "To forgive is human; to love is divine. Hating makes forgiving impossible, while loving means never having to forgive."

As Mother Theresa once said, "If we really want to love we must learn how to forgive. It's the only way to a love that frees."