

The Key to My Heart

On Sunday, February 14th we will celebrate Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day began in church. An annual church service and festive banquet celebrated the life, ministry and death of St. Valentinus of Rome. Valentinus, a Christian pastor, was arrested and accused of performing marriages for Roman Soldiers and their brides, and practicing the Christian faith, both of which were forbidden under Roman law at that time. He was convicted and sentenced to death. While in prison, Valentine performed a miracle in Jesus' name. He healed the daughter of his jailor, a Roman official named Asterius. The condemned saint wrote a letter to the girl in order to encourage her in her faith. He signed the letter, "Your Valentine," as a farewell.

Thanks to the influence of Geoffrey Chaucer and fellow poets, Valentine's Day became associated with romantic love and courting during the late Middle Ages. By the 18th Century, St. Valentine's Day became a day on which couples expressed their love for one another by presenting flowers, candy and cards, i.e., "Valentines." A unique Valentine's Day tradition arose in Wales. A young man declared his love and announced his marital intentions by giving his beloved a spoon decorated with a key. The key was known as, "The key to the man's heart." The key declared that the young man's heart was full of love for his lady. The key invited the lady to unlock his heart so that his love could flow freely to her. What a beautiful way of showing one's love for another.

We can see the Gospel in that beautiful Welsh Valentine's Day tradition. God the Father has declared His love for the human race. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16) God hands us the, "Key to His Heart," in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God's love for us is revealed in how He, "Gave his One and Only Son."

King David declared: *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."* (Psalm 51:5) By Jesus' immaculate conception by the power of the Holy Spirit and his virgin birth, Jesus redeemed human conception and birth from the power of sin. Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan to eat the forbidden fruit and thereby brought sin and death into our world. (Genesis 3:1-24). The Gospels declare that God sent Jesus to be tempted by Satan in the desert for 40 days. Satan tempted Jesus to commit every sin possible. The Scriptures declare that Jesus overcame Satan's temptations and thereby overcame Satan's victory over humanity.

Through the prophet Moses, God gave his people Israel the Ten Commandments and other moral and ceremonial laws for their good and for their protection. The people of Israel promised to obey God's laws. The Holy Scriptures testify to Israel's inability to keep God's laws. The Gospels testify that during his earthly life, Jesus obeyed the Ten Commandments and the other moral and ceremonial laws, thereby fulfilling God's laws.

Holy Scriptures reveal the consequences of breaking the Ten Commandments and God's other laws: pain, suffering, carnage and death. Scriptures reveal that God's most trusted and loved saints sinned and fell short of the mark. Scriptures declare that all have broken God's laws, all are guilty of sin and deserve punishment. For this reason, God used corrupt religious and political leaders to accuse and convict Jesus of the crime of blasphemy, the ultimate sin, by declaring he was God's one and only Son whom God had sent into the world to die for sin and be raised to new life. Jesus was sentenced to death

on the cross. He suffered and died on the cross on the first Good Friday and was raised from the dead on the First Easter Sunday.

God's most passionate desire for you is to unleash this love on you and make you one of His sons or daughters. He wants to take something from you. He wants to take your sin from you and put it on Jesus' cross so that Jesus suffers and dies for your sin. He wants to give you something. He wants to give you salvation. God gives you Jesus's perfect obedience and opens the door to eternal life. The key to God's heart is turned by faith. This faith also comes from God, from hearing the Gospel.

God has a key waiting for you. Come hear the Gospel of Jesus at Grace at 9:00 and 10:30 on Sunday mornings. Come out to and join us for a feast, at our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Super at 5:30 PM on February 9th, and come hear the Gospel at our Ash Wednesday service on February 10th.

In Christ, Pastor Ed Skutshek