

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, February 17, 2019

Once upon a time, a certain king was very rich and powerful. But he was most unhappy, for he desired a wife. Without a queen, the vast palace was an empty shell. One day, while riding through the streets of a small hamlet, he saw a beautiful peasant girl. The king was smitten.

He wondered how he might win her love. First he thought of issuing a royal decree commanding her to be his bride – BUT he quickly realized that, if she were forced to obey a royal decree, the king would never know if she genuinely loved him OR married him as an obedient and loyal subject.

Next the king considered overwhelming the maiden with diamonds and silver and royal finery – BUT he knew he would always wonder if she genuinely loved him or married him only for the riches and power he could give her.

He then thought about disguising himself as a peasant in order to meet her – BUT he dismissed that idea as too deceitful to be worthy of a king.

In the end, the king decided to shed his fine robes and royal prerogatives and go to the village and BECOME a peasant. He would live and work and laugh and suffer among them. THIS THE KING DID...and won the young woman's heart, and she became his wife and queen.

Soren Kierkegaard used this parable to describe the mystery of God's love for us...in the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. Paul reminds us today that through the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection we have a call to life and to LOVE. This love begins with family and friends, and the challenge of Jesus is that this love be extended to ALL. It is good that we have a Valentine's Day to remind us of our call to love. THE VALENTINE from God is God's own son, who became one of us to show us the way. It is important that we try to make EVERY DAY Valentine's Day in our love for those closest to us and to ALL, even our enemies.

The parable reminds us that love cannot be forced, or bought or faked. It is only real when it is really freely given. Those of you who are married and I did not understand all that was entailed of us as we made the vows and promises on the day of our marriages or ordination. And so we give thanks to all who have modeled love, unconditional love, for us over the years.

Luke's Gospel beatitudes in Jesus Sermon on the Plain, reinforce Jeremiah's curses and blessings that were issued centuries before. Love is not something we achieve. Love is something we give. Our model in all of this is the Christ. As we share the Body (and Blood) of Christ at this Eucharist, we are to BE Christ's love in us always in ALL WAYS.

And God is good...all the time.