

The Real Love Story

Matthew 11:18-25

Introduction

In 1970, Ali McGraw and Ryan O'Neil starred as Jenny and Oliver in the Oscar-winning movie, ***Love Story***. Jenny and Oliver were from totally different backgrounds, yet they met when they were in college and fell in love. This love grew strong and helped them overcome insurmountable odds. It carried them through all their struggles, including Jenny's battle with Cancer that ended in her death. One memorable, often quoted, line from the movie is, *Love is never having to say you're sorry*. It's been my experience that the opposite is true. I'm always apologizing to Carol, because I **love** her, and I **make mistakes**. If I didn't love her, I wouldn't feel the need to apologize. The only One who loves and never apologizes is God, because He *has nothing to apologize for*. He never makes mistakes. On this Sunday of **Love**, we're going to look at the *Real Love Story, God's Love Story*.

Love—The World's Definition

Romantic Love

We all make mistakes and, at one time or another, hurt a loved one. What kind of love would not have to say, "I'm sorry"? Let's break it down. What causes the need to apologize is **empathy**. When I have wronged another and feel the pain they feel, that's my drive to apologize. And it takes **self-awareness** and **honesty** to recognize I'm in the wrong. But a sincere apology takes **humility**. It's humbling to have to admit I made a mistake or am wrong. So, the world's love that doesn't have to apologize lacks **empathy, honesty, self-awareness** and **humility**. A word that sums this up is **self-centered**. That's what romantic love is. I love you; I need you; I can't get enough of you; you turn **me** on. The emphasis is on **me**. I love you, because of what you do for **me**.

Tolerance

Another view of worldly love is **tolerance**. At its root, to tolerate means *to put up with. I don't agree with you or like what you're doing, but for the sake of the greater good, I'll pretend it doesn't bother me.* So, if we tolerate each other, we don't have to apologize. Tolerance is basically sweeping it under the rug. But how much can you pile up under the rug before it doesn't lay flat?

Love—God's Definition

The word for God's Love is **agape**. It's a Greek word that means a **selfless, sacrificial Love**. This love lives for the other. It seeks the best for the other, with no thought of *what do I get out of this relationship?* The best picture of what this love looks like is the **cross**. God sacrificed Himself for fallen humanity, because it was what was *best for us*. It was the only way our sins could be forgiven and our relationship with God healed. As I said before, God doesn't have to apologize, but if we **love** Him, **we** do. That's what Confession and Absolution is all about. *I admit I'm a poor, miserable sinner, deserving judgment and death. But I am sorry for my sins and fall on Your grace and mercy. Please forgive me for the sake of Your Holy, Innocent Son.* If I didn't love God, I wouldn't say those things.

Love—God with Us

Where's God's love for us found? In the name given to His Son, **Immanuel—God with us**. God revealed His love for us by coming to us and living with us (Read **John 1:1-5, 14**). The word *eskenosen*, translated **dwelt** means *pitch one's tent or tabernacle*. This harkens back to the tabernacle of the Old Testament. God dwelt in the cloud above the tabernacle. He pitched His tent with us when the Son became one of us.

The Incarnate Word

This is the **Incarnate Word**. Think about this: at the Incarnation, the great God who created the universe became an **embryo** implanted in the womb of a common, young girl from Nazareth. The church calls Mary the Queen of Heaven and she is. But there was nothing special about her until she became the God-bearer. God uses **ordinary** people for **extra-ordinary** purposes.

The Spoken Word

Before the **Word** became flesh, He was simply the **Word**, the **Word** who **spoke** everything into existence. This is the same **Word** we hear today when the **Gospel** is read. God reveals Himself to us and gives His grace through the **Spoken Word**. He is God with us in the **Spoken Word**.

The Visible Word

The **Visible Word** is found in the **Sacrament of the Altar**. God was **in** the cloud over the tabernacle; He wasn't the cloud itself. In the same way, He isn't the bread and wine in Communion; He's **in** the bread and wine. God has chosen these three ways to be with us, to reveal His **Love** to us. He is the **Incarnate Word** born in Bethlehem, the **Spoken Word** of the Gospel and the **Visible Word** found in Communion. When we receive the bread and wine, we're taking part in the *Real Love Story*.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
