



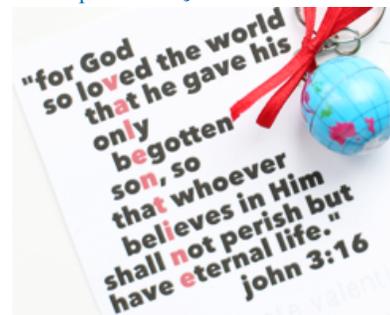
Today is St Valentine's Day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest card sending period of the year, with over 1 billion Valentine's Day cards sent. These cards will express in various ways the often anonymous sender's love for the recipient.

The tradition began in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and over the centuries since, everyone from Shakespeare to the Beatles have written or sung about love. Shakespearean tragedies "Romeo & Juliet", and in my 'A'-level English studies "Othello", explored aspects of love going wrong. Othello told his wife, "I do love thee! And when I love thee not, chaos comes again". In other words love was important for his peace of mind. Those whose hearts are full of angst & anger rather than love rarely have peace. The Beatles sang "All you need is love" & that from "love there's nothing you can do that can't be done... Nothing you can make that can't be saved... No one you can save that can't be saved... all you need is love!" They were making very powerful statements about the power of love.

But the reality is that we do live in a broken world, where to love others is to be vulnerable, and when that love

fails for whatever reasons, then to quote another song, "love hurts, love scars, love wounds & mars..."

1500 years before Shakespeare & 2000 before The Beatles, Paul (the apostle not McCartney!) also wrote extensively about the power of the **perfect love of Jesus**. Having been taught by the renown rabbi Gamaliel, a doctor of Mosaic law, Paul was aware of our duty to love God & one another from Old Testament writings. Then following his conversion and having spent time with the Risen Christ (Galatians 1:16-18), Paul understood about God's love for us, as demonstrated in the person of Jesus.



The Cross at Calvary was the ultimate and eternal sign of God's love for us. It was in the Middle

Ages that "X" began to be used to symbolize a kiss. The writer of a document would put the "X" at the bottom, then literally kiss it as a sign of their oath. Subsequently every Valentine's card is signed off X. During this same Middle Age period, the "X" also came to represent Christianity and the Cross. So for e.g. Christmas became Xmas. It was not by accident that Jesus' love for us found its culmination in the X on the Cross. Like Paul we Christians should understand that our faith is entirely "rooted in love".

The Bible mentions love almost 700 times, sometimes in ways that are not easy to follow. Matthew 5:44 tells us to "love our enemies & pray for those who persecute you". Paul in Romans 12:9 said, "Let your love be without hypocrisy", and then in 1 Corinthians 13 he provides a long qualitative list of love characteristics (which we will look at during Communion Zoom on Sunday at 2pm) before concluding in 1 Corinthians 16:14 "do everything in love". None of this is possible in our own strength, but rather we are empowered by Jesus' X.

Finally the importance of being rooted in love are seen clearly in the writings of John, the disciple who Jesus loved (John 21:20), and who as the senior Elder in the early church understood love better than most others. John's words are encouraging, but also challenging. When placed alongside Paul's directives, they provide a very high standard to love to. **Read them carefully & examine yourself.**

1 John 3<sup>14</sup> *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. **Anyone who does not love remains in death.** 1 John 4<sup>7</sup> *Dear friends, let us love one another, for **love comes from God.** Everyone who loves has been born of God & knows God. **Whoever does not love does not know God, because GOD IS LOVE.** <sup>9</sup>This is how God showed his love among us: He sent His one & only Son into the world that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us & sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **GOD IS LOVE.** Whoever lives in love lives in God, & God in them... <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love. But **PERFECT LOVE DRIVES OUT FEAR**, because fear has to do with punishment... <sup>19</sup> We love because He first loved us. <sup>20</sup> **Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar...** <sup>21</sup> He has given us this command: anyone who loves God **must also love their brother and sister.****



Starting this Thursday as above, with the next one on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March, we are having a monthly **CHURCH AND COMMUNITY ZOOM PRAYER TIME** called **BEACON OF LIGHT**.

At these a different person each month from outside the TCF church family but who work in our community will briefly tell us something about their work, what the challenges they are currently facing are, and what we can pray for. If people wish, they can ask them a few questions too.

This week, Deputy Head of Pool House, Mr Mearns, is speaking. Next month local councillor Tommy Anderson who is actively involved in policing and neighbour residents issues will attend.

This is also an opportunity for us as church family together to prayerfully focus on our own needs and challenges, and for whatever the future may hold for us.

**IF YOU CAN, PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND THIS**