

If you're ever feeling down about the state of the world, google true stories of love, agape love stories, sacrificial love stories, true love stories and you will find more stories than you ever imagined. One of my favorite movies, *Love Actually* begins:

Whenever I get gloomy with the state of the world, I think about the arrivals gate at Heathrow Airport. General opinion's starting to make out that we live in a world of hatred and greed, but I don't see that. It seems to me that love is everywhere. Often it's not particularly dignified or newsworthy, but it's always there – fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, old friends. When the planes hit the Twin Towers, as far as I know, none of the phone calls from the people on board were messages of hate or revenge – they were all messages of love. If you look for it, I've got a sneaky feeling you'll find that love actually is all around.

As we finish our worship series on Sharing God's Love, we turn to Paul's last phrase that love never ends and look to some true stories from the world and in our midst.

I adored my grandmother. She was loving, adventurous and kind. I have many memories of things she would say or do and though we only shared 11 years on earth, her love continues in my life. As an infant crawling in her house, I would often make my way to her closet and pull down off the hanger what I wanted. In particular, I would go and get this orange, flowered moo-moo that she had made. After countless times of re-hanging the dress, she made me my own blanket from her leftover material. As a new mom, I shared that blanket with my oldest. The day she died from

cancer, my mom took us over to her house and I immediately laid claim to this blanket that we would cuddle underneath together. It's moved everywhere I have and can usually be found in my office so I am reminded of her love. And finally, when I was pregnant with our second, I had a strong sense that it was a girl and wanted to name her Eleanor after my grandmother. It brightens my day, every time I call Ellie's name.

Agape love, unconditional, all encompassing love never ends. Why? Because this love comes from God and is rooted in who we are and whose we are. As Paul teaching to the church that love never ends calls us to continually act in and with love in all that we say and do, just as God does.

Many of us have watched an episode or more of the beloved children's show Mister Roger's Neighborhood. As we watched we were always welcomed in the neighborhood with his calm demeanor, his use of imagination and his invitation to always act in loving ways; Mr. Rogers was living and teaching the Gospel. Throughout his more than 33 years on public television, he never shied away from hard conversations. He began his television show in 1968 and helped children talk about the confusion & fear which arose after the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy. He addressed the Iran Hostage Crisis, the explosion of the Shuttle Challenger and even came out of retirement after 9/11. He said: "I would like to tell you what I often told you when you were much younger. I like you just the way you are. And what's more, I'm so grateful to you for helping the children in your life to know that you'll do everything you can to keep them safe. And to help them express their feelings in ways that will bring healing in many different neighborhoods." Throughout his ministry,

he repeated this piece of advice that I share with children: “when things are scary, look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.”

Some of you may have seen the movie *50 First Dates*. It wasn't until this week that I learned that movie was inspired by a true story of a man who reminds his wife every day who he is and what her life is now. In 1994 she was in 2 road accidents that resulted in a rare amnesia which left her long term memory intact but anything after the accident she could only recall for 24 hours. Day after day, he patiently, lovingly loves his wife so she can live that day. Never ending love.

Shawna & Mike Dennehey had 3 children when they saw a picture of a boy from Romania who had no arms, in need of a forever home. They adopted & welcomed George into their family. They adopted 8 additional children, many of whom also had disabilities from around the world. Never ending love.

We only have to look at those in our midst for more stories of never ending love.

Dixie shares: Because of the corona virus pandemic, we have been told to wash our hands frequently to help prevent the spread of the disease...to wash at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water. Instead of counting the 20 seconds, it was suggested that we hum “The Birthday Song” TWICE! At Faith UMC, our Pastor Christie Hale suggested that we sing the Doxology, “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”, which would be about 24 seconds sung only ONCE! So I have been doing that, and also following with a prayer asking God to eradicate the corona virus and to heal all who are affected in

any way...according to His will. I actually felt better every time I washed my hands in that way, so I decided to post the lyrics to the Doxology and also the Gloria Patri which is “Glory Be to the Father” (It only needs to be sung ONCE to cover 20-24 seconds of hand washing.) I hope you will benefit by singing either of these two songs or even alternating them as you do the frequent hand washing. We truly are in this together in this one world with one loving God.

A family raising their grandchildren;

A family caring for a parent with dementia;

A member providing phone numbers, registration links for Covid vaccines;

A member who welcomes every new face that comes through our doors, without fail;

A member who calls and checks in our members not able to leave their homes;

A member who delivers bulletins & sermons to members who do not have internet during the pandemic;

Member who collected tarps, nails, diapers and other needs for our neighbors after Hurricane Laura;

Members who pray daily for each name on our prayer list;

A family who has opened their home and welcomed another who needs a safe and loving environment; and

A member who quietly behind the scenes, tends to small details around the facility.

We could continue to list the many ways we individually and as a church family, practice never ending love in big and small ways. May we hold these stories as a reminder to keep acting in and with love in all that we say and do. May we carry never ending love into the world so that others may feel it too. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.