

1 John 4:7-12

“Sacrificial Love”

June 4, 2016

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. (1John 4:7-12)

I have been a Fire Chaplain for a few years. During those years I have seen the dedication of those in the Fire Service. It is a sacrifice to put your time, and your bodies and your lives on the line for others. The text I have chosen for today's memorial service reminds us of the source of that love. Our God leads by example. Our God is the role model for all of us to follow. Our God, the Lord Jesus Christ, gave His life that we might have hope. He gave His life that we might live with Him forever.

Recently I was reminded of this world and its trials that steal hope from us. I talked to a mother of an addict and read a book about another mother's struggle with her son's addiction. Today I am reminded that fire fighters also live with struggles in this life. In a course I took in Buffalo I was told that chronic post traumatic stress disorder is part of the price that fire fighters pay when they go

fight fires, rescue the injured and clean up after the fatal accidents and fatal fires. This can lead to divorces and alcoholism for those who are unprepared to deal with the chronic PTSD. I am sure that some of those we remember today had to battle the pressure chronic PTSD. Those who struggled no longer struggle because they have been passed on to the Lord and they no longer have to battle the pressure that builds from years of seeing and hearing too much. Conventions like this are one of the many ways that you can safely release some of the emotional pressure of what you see and hear so that you do not lose hope. We release it by sharing our stories and supporting each other by our presence.

In our text we are told that the sacrificial love of God for us as expressed at the Cross at Calvary is that love we now express in our relationships with our world. Those we honor today have finished their journey through life and now we honor them for the sacrificial love they gave us as they served in the fire company. It does not matter if they served in the company and never became an officer. It does not matter if they served in many positions as officers in the company and throughout the state. It does not matter what they did in their job or community. They served faithfully and sacrificially among us and now we honor that service.

I spoke of the hope that can be stolen from us by our world, by fires or by accidents. Just as our sacrificial service brings some hope to those who are struggling in our world, in a fire or in an accident, so Christ's sacrificial service

brings hope to our fallen world. We live in a world that measures a person's worth by what they produce in this life. When we go to rescue, we don't ask if the person has value in the eyes of our world. We go and place our lives on the line because our sacrificial love draws us to make the sacrifice. In Romans chapter five, we are told that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Christ did not measure our value and worth to Him or in our world before He gave His life for us. We follow His example.

Sometimes I ask if someone knows if they are going to heaven or not. Often they respond that they are not sure because they do not know if they have been good enough. None of us have been good enough to go to heaven. Scripture reminds us of that when it says; "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Therefore the general rule is that when you point to yourself, we will always come up short no matter how hard we try. However, Christ brings us hope because He paid our way and no one falls short when we place our trust in Him. Even the weakest of faith have hope because Christ makes perfect the imperfect. Therefore while that world steals our hope in so many ways like fires and accidents, Christ restores and brings us hope especially at times like today when we remember those who have gone before us. Amen.