

Good morning! This is Sunny Ahn, the Senior Pastor at Kona United Methodist Church. I am glad that you are with us this morning. Let me start today's message with a short story.

[Story] Joe had asked Bob to help him out with the deck after work, so Bob just went straight over to Joe's place. When they got to the door, Joe went straight to his wife, gave her a hug and told her how beautiful she was and how much he had missed her at work. When it was time for supper, he complimented his wife on her cooking, kissed her and told her how much he loved her. Once they were working on the deck, Bob told Joe that he was surprised that he fussed so much over his wife. Joe said that he'd started this about 6 months ago, it had revived their marriage, and things couldn't be better.

Bob thought he would give it a try also. When he got home, he gave his wife a massive hug, kissed her and told her that he loved her. His wife burst into tears. Bob was confused and asked why she was crying. She said, "This is the worst day of my life. First, little Billy fell off his bike and twisted his ankle. Then, the washing machine broke down and flooded the basement. And now, you come home drunk!"

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Showing love is not an easy task. If you google "how to show love," then you will get 10 billion plus results in 0.67 seconds. That much people are looking for a way to express their love which is great. However, oftentimes the expression of our love is not always well received by others as intended.

For example, the way I am loving my church is offering a reasonable worship by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ weekly. Especially during this pandemic, offering a weekly worship has been a challenge due to the change of worship ministry platform—from offline to online. So, with the support from the leadership team of our church, I have been fully focused on worship while other leaders take on other ministry responsibilities. I have been saying "NO" to everything, except those essential things I have to do for having a weekly worship virtually. For some, I know that this is not the way you want your pastor to show

her love for the church. But, please know that this is my best way to love the church in the given situation.

Another example is from when my hubby Sung and I just got married. I think he assumed that all girls like to receive flowers. He showed how much he loved me by buying me a bouquet of flowers. For a while, I just let it be and appreciated him for it. However, I don't like flowers. I have allergy. It gives me a headache. So, finally I told him not to buy me flowers anymore for showing his love. Instead, I told him to take out the trash if he loves me 😊 Yes, he takes out the trash weekly and I felt love by him 😊

Love may be universal, but it's hardly the same for everyone. But the love that God has shown us is different. Apostle Paul tells us here in Romans 5:8 that God has shown us how much He loves us in the death of Christ. Our focal verse this morning is Romans 5:8, "But God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!" We are looking closely at "But God has shown us how much he loves us." In the King James version of the Bible, it says, "But God demonstrates His own love." Other translations state that "God proved His love." Let's put this all into the context of Romans 5:6-8.

This is the overwhelming part for me personally about Jesus dying on the cross for me. He did not die for good people. He did not die for those who are perfect and righteous. Jesus came to save the imperfect and the lost. He came to save those that needed saving. He came to save the humanity. I know that not everyone sees it quite that way. They may have never done anything bad, at least in their own eyes or in the eyes of the world. But everyone has offended Holy God at some point according to the scripture. Romans 3:23 says, "we all have sinned..." And, "the wage of that sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Romans 5:6 says, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (NKJV). This verse talks about you and me. There was a time when we were "without strength." Other translations say that we were "powerless," or "helpless." This, in context, does not mean physical weakness, but rather our moral frailty. At the right time, Christ died "for the ungodly." In our moral frailty we were unable to understand, much less able to do those things of God. We were unable to even go to God. We were lost in our sins. Verse 10 of Romans 5 goes further and says that we were enemies with God.

Then Paul changes gears for a moment. He takes a humanly look around and he makes the comment in verse 7: “It is a difficult thing for someone to die for a righteous person. It may even be that someone might dare to die for a good person” (Romans 5:7)

Who would you die for? Let’s look at that for a second. We would jump up and say I would die for my spouse, or my child, or other family members whom we love. I have read accounts of men in combat who would throw themselves on a grenade to save their comrades. I know many of service men and women have sacrificed their lives for the freedom we are enjoying today. I also know that still many of service men and women are currently serving our country by scarifying their lives. What a sacrificial love that is! Thank you. I pray for God’s extra protection for our service men and women... and their families.

Yes, we understand that there are people we love and if called upon and perhaps we would take their place if they were in danger. If we were able, we would step in as a substitute for our loved ones, to take what unpleasant experience they would be facing, to enable them to avoid the unpleasant experience, whether it be disease, punishment, and perhaps even death itself.

But what if we had a chance to fill it as a substitute for someone we despised? Someone who was, in our eyes, scum of the earth, and who we figured deserved everything bad that was coming their way? But this is what happens with us and God. Yes, God is love, but God is also just. Justice will prevail. God set the penalty for sin as death back in the garden and justice will be met and justice must be met. But also because of His great love for us, Almighty God sends Jesus to take our place: “But God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!” (Romans 5:8)....while we were still sinners....

Do we begin to realize the great love that God has shown us? God has shown His love for us! God demonstrates His love in Christ Jesus. In the Greek, the word, *shown or show or demonstrate*, is in the Present-Active-Indicative tense. We can easily say that God “keeps on demonstrating” His love towards us...or God keeps on showing His love for us. How? Because “while we were still sinners,” while we were morally frail and ungodly, while we were enemies with God, it was while we were bad people, deserving of the wages of our sins, while we deserved spiritual, and eternal death, that “Christ died for us.”

God did not wait for us to clean up our act. God did not wait for us to merit His love. Of course, we would never measure up to the level of His love. God did not wait for all of that. He sent His only begotten Son Jesus, to die in our place, as our substitute. If that does not prove that God loves us, what more could we ask for?

Because of that love, I am who I am. Also, I do whatever I do because of that love. I love the church, especially Kona United Methodist Church where God has placed me at right now, not because Kona United Methodist Church is a perfectly loving church...but because the church is God's means of expressing His love to the world.

I love the church with whoever I am and with whatever I have because of God's love that has been shown to me in Christ Jesus. Because God has placed me here at Kona to love, so I do love the church. I do believe that God has placed you here at Kona also today and has shown you His love. So, I ask... "How do you love the church? How would you show your love for God?" The answer is yours. Amen.