

“I’ve heard it said that a man would climb a mountain
Just to be with the one he loves
How many times has he broken that promise?
It has never been done.

I’ve never climbed the highest mountain
But I walked the hill of Calvary

[chorus]

Just to be with you, I would do anything
There’s no price I would not pay
Just to be with you, I would give anything
I would give my life away.

I’ve heard it said that a man would swim the ocean
Just to be with the one he loves
All of those dreams are an empty emotion
It can never be done
I’ve never swam the deepest ocean
But I walked upon the raging sea.

[chorus]

I know that you don’t understand
The fullness of My love
How I died upon the cross for your sins.
And I know that you don’t realize how much that I
gave you
But I promise, I would do it all again.

Just to be with you, I’ve done everything
There is no price I did not pay
Just to be with you, I gave everything
Oh Yes. I gave my life away.

I gave my life away

Just to be with you,

Oh, Just to be with you (repeat x2)

Third Day. “Love Song”. Johnny Mac Powell, Mark D. Lee, Bradley B. C. Avery,
Samuel Tai Anderson, David Car. *Third Day*. Reunion 1996. 7” CD

Pray

Matthew 14:22-33

“Real Love”

I think we should take a moment and thank the choir for that awesome rendition of “Aint No Mountain High Enough.” Y’all give the choir a round of applause. That was awesome. Thank you so much. The reason I asked the choir to sing “Aint No Mountain High Enough” is because I’ve been thinking a lot about love. Specifically, I have been thinking about the ways we express love for one another, and the way God loves us.

<- Sing

Very often when we fall in love we have this wave of emotions. We feel so good we want to promise that special person the world. “Oh baby there aint no mountain high enough, aint no valley low enough, aint no river wide enough, to keep me from getting to you babe.”¹ (**pause**) But then life happens, and sometimes life is hard. I talked to a guy just this week at Bojangles and he told me this story. When his wife had their first child he was on the closing shift at work and she was on the opening shift. For a couple of years they basically saw each other long enough to say to each other, “Hi. Thank you. I love you. Bye,” handed off the baby, and headed off to work. That kind of life is hard. Suddenly, it feels like there are a lot of mountains, valleys and rivers keeping the two love birds apart. When hard times come up in life the love we felt is still there, but the promises we made are almost like ghosts in the night. Shakespear put it this way.

“Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs; / Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes; / Being vexed a sea nourish’d with loving tears: What is it else? / A madness most discreet, a choking gall, and a preserving sweet.”²

However powerful our feelings may have been there are hundreds of obstacles life

¹ Marvin Gaye, Tammi Terrell. “Aint No Mountain High Enough”. Nickolas Ashford, Valerie Simpson. *Untitled*. Tamla 1967. 7” Record.

² Shakespear. *Romeo and Juliet*. 1.1.197-201

throws in the way of love, and we have to make choices. Sometimes life just doesn't give us good choices. **(pause)** And yet it is in the making of those hard choices our character is revealed.

It's been hard to watch the news about Charlottesville, Virginia. I have watched the images where so much fear has bred so much pain and violence. This is the path of fear. This path of fear leads to hate. How many of those marching on both sides are members of churches? What kind of example are they setting? Brennan Manning once said, **see box** Sisters and brothers please hear me when I say this. Our Christian faith is not a ghost or vapor of the past that our lives may pass through it unaffected. Our faith is born from the very real love God has for all of us. As we struggle the events in Charlottesville, Virginia, let us consider the example Christ set for us.

"The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians: who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, walk out the door, and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable." Brennan Manning

Last week we talked about how just before the feeding of the 5000 Jesus was looking for a lonely place after hearing the news John the Baptist was murdered. This morning's message takes place just after the feeding of the 5000. Jesus has dismissed the crowds and told the Disciples to get into the boat and go before Him to the other side. Jesus went into the hills and found the time He needed to pray. When He was done Jesus saw the boat with the disciples being beaten by the wind and the waves. So there in the fourth watch of the night Jesus came to the disciples, walking on the water. The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost in the night, and were terrified. But Jesus calls out to them, **"Take heart, it is I; have no fear"** (Matt 14:27).

The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost. Think about it for a minute. How many times have we dismissed God's love as something the preacher says on Sunday morning? How many times have we ignored it when someone says God loves us because that's just a nice thing people say? If that's all God's love is then Jesus Christ might as well have been a ghost. **(pause)** Jesus Christ is real. Amen? **Amen.** (x2) Jesus Christ really did walk on a raging sea to come to the disciples. Amen? **Amen.** Sisters and brothers how many times have we followed Peter's example and stepped out in faith on a sunny day? How many times have we looked to Jesus with bright excited eyes and boldly called out, **"bid me come to you on the water"** (v28)? **(pause)** How many times have we continued in Peter's example when the slightest distraction, or smallest challenge comes and we fall right back into the stormy waters of fear, and hate, and despair? **(pause)** And once again we are calling out to Jesus? **(pause)** Sisters and brothers, why do we call out to Jesus when the storms of life rage and life gives us nothing but poor choices? **(pause)** We call out to Jesus because deep down we know Jesus is real. Amen? **Amen.** Jesus' love for all of us is real; concrete and secure. God's love for us is not some pie crust promise which is "easily made and easily broken."³ Neither is God's love like some wisp of fog which mistaken for a ghost can be blown away by a gentle breeze.

God's love is strong. God's love sent Jesus Christ, not to rage and to war, but to pay the price for all of our sins. Jesus was arrested, mocked, beaten and convicted of being exactly who He is - the Son of God. Jesus was handed over to the Romans who beat Him again, and then caned and scourged Him, and pushed a cruel crown of thorns on His head. Jesus was forced to carry his cross – the punishment for our sins, to Calvary. There Jesus was crucified until dead. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. When Jesus rose from the dead Jesus left all of our sins behind. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior we also accept Jesus Christ as our Lord. We are to let our old habits and failures die in our past. We are to live abundantly under Jesus Christ as our Lord. **(pause)** We are to do what Jesus says.

Last weekend I went with the Youth to ropes course at the Mt. Shepherd Retreat Center. See there is the picture of me hanging in the trees. While up in the trees there was a steel cable above us. That cable was like God. There was a lanyard connecting us to God which we thought of as Jesus Christ. The Smart system that

³ Disney, W., Walsh, B. (1964). *Mary Poppins* [Motion Picture]. Unites States: Walt Disney Pictures

connected us to God through Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit. This may seem like a metaphor while we are sitting in the pews, but 30 feet up in the trees it was real. The system is real, and so is God's love.

Now after three years of traveling with the disciples I think Jesus knew Human beings have good days and bad days. Some days we do terrible things. Sometimes we fall. Jesus is always reaching out to us, and Jesus keeps us from being separated from God. I believe that is why on the night in which Jesus gave His life for us Jesus gave us a means to take up strength in Him. On that night Jesus gave us Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a real and concrete way God offers God's love to us. Through Holy Communion we can find the strength to get up from our mistakes and begin to do God's will again. Let us praise the Lord for the very real and concrete ways God shares God's love with us as we celebrate Holy Communion.

In the Name of Jesus Christ – Amen.