

Sermon – Deuteronomy 10 and 26 Reflecting Love

III – Look-a-likes. Some say that people who really love their pets begin to look like them after a while. For example...(visual)

But on a deeper level, our lives do often reflect an image of the things we love.

For example, I used to have a neighbour who had a real love for his lawn. He would spend hours weeding it every week, in his socks – so he didn't damage it. He would take 3 hours every Saturday to mow it. Fertiliser. Water. Top dressing. Beautiful lawn. His love for his lawn was reflected in his life.

People can look at our lives and see what we love, because our true love, our real passion, is reflected in our life – in the way we spend our time, in the way we spend our money, in the way we relate to people, our priorities.

* Our lives reflect an image of the things we love.

What does your life look like? Finish this sentence: When people look at my life, they see a person who loves ...? their lawn? money? sport? people? God?

Turn with me to chapter 10, vv 12-13:

** “12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?”*

The reason God's people are to follow God's laws is so we reflect him in our lives. Today, we're talking about reflecting God's love. So we need to begin by looking at the sort of love God shows us. Let's turn to verse 14:

** 14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. 15 Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today.*

God is the god of the heavens and the earth. So what we notice first of all about God's love for us is that it's **unbelievable**. It's unbelievable that the God of the heavens and the earth, the God who flung stars into space and created all the galaxies that make up our universe, chooses to love humans. And I guess we can often stop and ask the question “Why?” Why does God care for us? Why does the God of the universe care about the Israelites? Why does he care about **us**? Why would he bother? And certainly for us, why would he care so much that he would send Jesus, his only son, to die for our sin?

* BUT WHY?

III – Have you ever been asked by a child those annoying “*But why*” questions?

Daddy, what day is it? Tuesday. But why? Because it's the day after Monday. But why? Because Monday is over. But why? There's no answer for that.

Daddy, why is the ground wet? Because it's raining. But why? Well, warm air turns the water from rivers, lakes, and oceans into water vapour that rises into the air. That water vapour forms clouds, which contain small drops of water or ice crystals (depending on how high the cloud is and how cold it is). As clouds rise higher and higher, the air gets colder and colder. When the water vapour in the cloud becomes too heavy, it falls back to the ground as rain or snow... But why?

Why did Jesus die on a cross? To take the punishment for our sin. But why? Because someone had to be punished for our sin. But why? Because God is a just and fair God. But why? Because he's God. But, WHY did he let *Jesus* die? Because he loves us. But why? There's no answer for that.

Why does God love us? It's simply a question we are unable to answer adequately. We have done nothing to deserve His love. We sin against him. But he still **chooses** to love us. You see, God's love is incomprehensible. It's surprising. It's unwarranted. Undeserved. Unbelievable. And not only has God decided to love us, he's promised to **continue** to love us, no matter what we *have* done and no matter what we *will* do! This is very important – God cannot love us more than he does already. And he refuses to love us any less. No matter what we've done. GOD KNOWS why he loves us this much. So instead asking "Why?", perhaps the better response is actually to ask, "Well, since God **does** love us, how does he want us to respond to his love?"

And the answer is, at least in this passage from Deuteronomy "By reflecting his love". And we do that in two ways:

- * 1. By reflecting his love to the world.
- * 2. By reflecting his love back to him, and

So first, how do we reflect his love to others?

*** Reflecting God's love to the world**

Let's look at 10:18-19 –

** 18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. 19 And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.*

The love that God shows, we are to show. Surprising love. Unexpected love. Unbelievable love. Not only to one another, but to the outsider, to the alien, to the fatherless and the widow. Reflecting the real active love of God to the world we're in. So how do we do that?

III – I used to attend church in Parramatta, and in the mall next to the church, there was a guy who used to wander up and down "preaching". He wore a long torn coat, and carried a tattered Bible. He would pray out loud from the bench seat he was lying on. If you walked close enough to his seat, he would mumble "God bless you." as you passed by. He would occasionally stand on a small box and speak about the sin in the world and the need to repent. He was saying all the right words. Jesus loves you. You're all sinners. God will judge you. You need to repent before the final day. We all believe that right? That's true. We are all sinners. God does love us. We need to repent or face the eternal fire of hell. That's what my Bible says. Yet no-one listened to him.

But around the corner, only 100 metres away, there were some other Christians. Sitting up in a room they called "The Caring Centre". People who were in need would come in to receive a bag of groceries. Or a voucher to pay their electricity bill. Or some nappies and food and blankets for their baby. Upstairs in this small room were a group of people who were there to help anyone who needed help. Or just to talk if that's what they needed.

The guy in the mall was reflecting words, but the other people were reflecting actions. They were reflecting the LOVE of God, not just the WORDS of God. They believed the same things but they had a heart that reflected God's heart and God's love. What God calls in Deuteronomy 10:16 "a circumcised heart". What does that mean?

I'm sure we all know what **circumcision** is. In the Old Testament, God called all the men of Israel to be circumcised – this was to be the sign of their covenant with him. It was a symbol of a covenant agreement – like a tattoo or a membership badge. Many people were physically circumcised as an Israelite, but they didn't all LOVE God with all their heart and soul. Their hearts weren't circumcised. Their hearts were unchanged.

Today, God has made a new covenant through the blood of Jesus. Instead of circumcision, we use the symbol of **Baptism** to show our membership in Christ's Church. And today, there are many who have been baptised, but their **hearts** have not been baptised. Their hearts are unchanged.

If our heart is not changed, then we are not the people of God. If we follow signs and laws, it means nothing – unless our heart is changed.

Reflecting God's love for people means having a heart that cares for people in a very real and active way.

*** 2. Reflecting God's love back to Him**

Second, we need to reflect God's love back to him. Deuteronomy 26 gives us a good example of how to do this:

The Israelites are told that when God leads them into their land and they have their first harvest of food from their crops, they were to take a tenth of their crops to the temple of God and offer it to the Lord. This was to be a reflection of God's love and provision for them. God made them a great nation, God lead them out of slavery. God lead them safely through the desert for 40 years. God lead them into the Promised Land. And God gave them all their crops and all their possessions. They were to bring a tenth of those crops to God as a reflection of his generosity to them. And this offering was to come from the heart – just as God's provision for them had come from his heart. Listen to the instruction in verse 10b-11:

** Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. 11 And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall **rejoice** in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.*

This is what a circumcised heart looks like. One that gives the best of what we have to God with rejoicing. Not out of duty. Not out of obligation. But with a heart that is joyful and generous and sacrificial towards God, just as he is towards us.

Deuteronomy is not just about reflecting the **law** of God, but reflecting the **heart** of God.

What does your life reflect?

Do you reflect God's love to the people of this world?

Do you reflect God's love to God himself?

How does *your* life reflect the love of God?