

“The Language of Life”

John 1:1-4

Dr. Jim Davis, December 7, 2008

First Presbyterian Church - Kingwood

I want to begin a series of sermons this morning. It will carry us through the rest of Advent. And I hope it will get us ready to celebrate the birth of Christ in a way that adds more to the Christmas story we think we already know. For I believe it was in an attempt to do that, to help Christians add more meaning to the Christmas story, that John wrote the prologue to the gospel that bears his name, the Gospel of John.

And instead of adding more to the story like Luke did, when he took Matthew's Christmas story and added Mary's memories to it; instead of doing that, John did something completely different. Instead of adding more story to the story, he added a poem, a song. The really interesting thing though is that the song is sung in three languages. Not three verbal languages, but three love languages.

They are the three love languages of a God “who so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” And the truth is when John writes those famous words in 3:16 he is just repeating himself. For in John 1, John had already written us about a God whose Word to us spoke the love language of life.

I wonder though, is that phrase “love language” familiar to you? It was coined in 1992 by Dr. Gary Chapman, in a book he wrote called, *The Five Love Languages*. The book became a best-seller. It stayed on the New York Times list for over four years. And it's still in print, still selling hundreds of thousands of copies a year in over 40 countries; all because Dr. Chapman came up with a simple but powerful concept. I'll let him explain it to you.

“In the area of linguistics,” he writes, “there are major language groups: Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Greek, German, French, and so on. Most of us grow up learning the language of our parents and siblings which becomes our primary or native tongue. Later we may learn additional languages, but usually with much more effort. We speak and understand best our native language ...

in the area of love, it's similar. Your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be familiar to you but to your spouse it may be as different as Chinese is from English!"

And I imagine if I stopped right there and asked for a show of hands from all of us in the room who have experienced the truth of that statement at some time in our marriage or some other relationship ... if I did that, I'm sure almost every hand in the room would go up. It's a simple concept, and it simply makes sense. There are different ways in which people express love.

In fact, says Dr. Chapman there are five ways. "My conclusion," he writes, "after twenty years of marriage counseling is that there are basically five emotional love languages five ways that people speak and understand emotional love." Spending quality time with another person, using words of affirmation, giving someone a gift, serving them in some way, loving them with a form of physical touch; these are the five primary ways human beings express love.

And it would be hard, I think, to argue, for these are indeed five foundational ways in which all of us give and receive love. But here's a question. What about God? What are some of the some of the ways God expresses love. What are some of God's love languages?

When you pose the question that way, you start, I think, to realize something. You realize that the whole Bible was in fact written to answer that question. That's why I'm still excited about what I shared with you last Sunday. In just a few weeks now, in 2009 you and I are going to have a tremendous opportunity, an opportunity to read the Bible together in a program we're calling "Storyline."

And I can tell you this. If you take the time to participate in "Storyline," if you decide this morning after worship to go to Fellowship hall and purchase a *Daily Walk Study Bible* and then read it with all of the rest of us in 2009, I can tell you, you will discover something. You will discover some new ways in which God loves you because it's just not possible to read the Bible from cover to cover and not learn more about God's love languages.

But so many Christians don't the time. They don't read the whole Bible. They just read little pieces of it. And it as though they were reading little bits of a love letter. They never see the whole puzzle into which the pieces fit.

Or to put the point another way, they never take the time to learn the different love languages God speaks in different parts of the Bible, and as a result they can't hear God speaking to them those same languages today. So they feel like God is out

there somewhere, but not really close to them. Because they don't know the language, they can't hear God speak.

But one disciple didn't miss the message. His name was John and as he reflected on what God had done when He sent His son to earth, as he reflected on the incarnation in the light of the Scriptures ... the Scriptures that were taught to him at home and read to him each week in the Synagogue, the Scriptures he memorized so he could call them to mind and meditate on them and use them in his prayers... as John reflected on the incarnation in the light of the storyline of the Old Testament, he realized three profound truths.

God had reached out, John realized, and given us a gift. God had reached out in order to serve us. God had reached out and touched us. God had spoken His love for the world, John realized, by speaking to us in love languages we could comprehend.

However, as Dr. Chapman points out, "In the field of linguistics, a language may have numerous dialects or variations. In the same way, in the five basic emotional love languages, there are many dialects." And John knew that too. He knew that God had spoken to us at Christmas with a new word, a new dialect.

So John wrote the prologue of his gospel to try and help us understand it. He wrote to help us understand God's love language of life. It was spoken John says by the Word. For "in Him was life." He wrote to help us understand God's love language of light. For the "light" of the Word "shines in the darkness" to show us the way. And John wrote last to help us understand God's love language of touch. For "the Word became flesh" John writes and "dwelt among us."

Love that gifts, and serves, and touches; these are the ways we express love to each other as human beings. These are our love languages, and they have been spoken to us at Christmas John knows but spoken to us in a new way, in God's dialect, through the Word.

So this morning, I want to spend just a few more minutes now before we come to the communion table together thinking with you about what Christmas really means by thinking about the language of life, the way the Word seeks to love us by gifting us for "in Him," John says, "was life."

Last Friday morning, my friend Mark Smith made a confession to all of us at Men's Fraternity. Men's Fraternity, by the way, is one of the best ways I know to connect with other men in our church. It meets every Friday morning at 6am and

even though it's hard to believe the Fellowship Hall is almost full and every man is welcome.

Anyway, last Friday, Mark Smith, who teaches for us at Men's Fraternity, made a confession to us. He told us that one of his favorite movies was a movie called *Braveheart*. So I thought, in honor of Mark, I'd tell you a story about a scene in that movie that helps me understand a little more about the first love language of Christmas, the language of life.

Let me give you just a little bit of background though in case you don't know the movie. *Braveheart* tells the story of how a Scottish commoner named William Wallace who led Scotland to freedom. At the end of the movie though, Wallace is betrayed to English enemies and in the scene I want to tell you about he is sitting in prison awaiting his execution.

The Princess of Wales, who wants to free him, comes to his cell. She asks if there is any way he could possibly recant his rebellion and save his life. "I come," she says, "to beg you to confess all and swear allegiance to the king so that he may show you mercy and spare your life."

Wallace says, "If I swear to him, all that I am is dead already."

Weeping, the princess says, "You will die. It will be awful."

And Wallace replies "Every man dies. Not every man really lives,"

So what does it mean to really live?

Well, according to John it means three things. To really live means first to understand that our physical life is a gift of God. "All things" John says "were made by Him and without Him not one thing came into being." So to start to really live we must believe in a God who created us.

But there's more. To really live means second to realize that God's great desire is to gift us with more than just physical life. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," John writes in chapter 3, reminding us of Jesus' words, "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." So don't be surprised, Jesus says, when I tell you "you must be born again." To really live we must believe not only in a God who created us but in a God who wants to create a new kind of life within us.

And to really live we must believe in one more thing. "I am the resurrection and the life," John writes in chapter 11, reminding us again of Jesus' words, "those who believe in me, even though they die will live and those who live and believe in me will never die." To really live we must believe that the God who gives us the gift

of physical life at birth and the gift of spiritual life when we are born again wants to give us one more gift, the gift of eternal life.

Life that begins with one gift and is deepened with two is completed with three. It is God's love language of life, and it seeks to gift every single human being John says. Has it gifted you yet? Let us pray ...