**True Love**

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,    because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;   he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,    and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;****2****to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,   and the day of vengeance of our God;   to comfort all who mourn;****3****to grant to those who mourn in Zion—    to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,    the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;  
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,    the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.****4****They shall build up the ancient ruins;    they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,    the devastations of many generations. (Isaiah 61:1-4, ESV)*

True love is the saving work of God’s Anointed One for us.

Greetings dearly beloved as we talk today about true, constant, and invaluable love. The greatest love is Jesus’ love. It is also God’s sending of Christ to us – it is also God’s will that none of us perish, but rather be saved through Jesus Christ. Today’s message is based on the latter theme. Again, True love is the Love of God’s Anointed One, Jesus the Savior’s love, which comes to us to give us new life. Let’s see more about the details of this Love…

Genuine love is a renewing love coming from God’s Anointed Servant, Jesus Christ. God sent His Son so that no one would perish but be freed through Him. It is worth it to take a few minutes to go over the characteristics of this Anointed Savior or ours… First, God’s Spirit is on Him. That presence of the Holy Spirit works with the Anointed One so that works of salvation can be accomplished. The poor receive good news about their plight. The brokenhearted get healed. The captives are set free – the prisoners are let go. The mourners are comforted, putting a beautiful headdress instead of ashes on their heads. There is sweet smelling oil on their bodies instead of the dust of defeat and loss. Instead of depression there is the sign of joy through beautiful clothing – (though the joy itself can be a beautiful “clothing” too). Instead of a people buried by injustice, they will be healthy people standing like oak trees, because of justice being carried out for them. All this will be for God’s glory, and the beneficiaries will, in turn, repair God’s city, where the center of worship-life was. They would repair its walls so the people of God would be safe – and the former ruins would be removed so new structures could be erected in their place. In other words, the Anointed Servant was going to renew His people, and they, with their received joy and energy would cause both their own lives and their surroundings to flourish.

That constantly renewed life was something that was apparent with a minister by the name of Brooks, who was the pastor of Boston’s Trinity Episcopal Church. Brooks perhaps best known as the author of "O Little Town of Bethlehem." He was a very busy pastor, yet he always seemed relaxed and unburdened, willing to take time for anyone in need. Shortly before Brooks died, a young friend wrote to him and asked the secret of his strength and serenity. In a heartfelt response, Brooks credited his still-growing relationship with Christ.

He wrote, "The more I have thought it over, the more sure it has seemed to me that these last years have had a peace and fullness which there did not used to be. It is a deeper knowledge and truer love of Christ....I cannot tell you how personal this grows to me. He is here. He knows me and I know Him. It is the most real thing in the world. And every day makes it more real. And one wonders with delight what it will grow to as the years go on."

Jesus was sent to renew all of humanity, starting with the people of Israel. When most of them rejected His Gospel and also His apostles’ ministry, the love of God spread to the whole world, including us (anyway). God sent His Good News through His Good Son, the Anointed Savior-King so that people would be renewed and come out of their hopelessness. Even though God’s peoples’ hopes were political at the time, through Jesus, having God’s kingdom is now connected with having God’s King within and among us as the source of new life.

God showed us His greatest act of love by sending Jesus to our world. Today we can have a new or renewed life through Him. Therefore, come and let us refresh our spiritual walk by focusing on Jesus once again, remembering that we have life through Him and that without Him, there is neither forgiveness of sin, nor hope either in this or the next life. May this latter truth wake us up, so that our joy may come from our focus on His coming in this Advent season. True love is God’s renewing love coming through the Anointed Servant, Jesus Christ, who gives us new life. May the Lord grant us to accept that life and to keep that love burning brightly. The Lord bless you. Amen.