

“Will You Be My Valentine?”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for FUMC Grand Junction, Sunday, Feb. 14, 2021

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ
website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/sermons/>

Scripture Text:

1 John 4:7-12 [NLT]

OPENING

February 14th – Valentine’s Day – falls on a Sunday every 6 years. But I have no idea when the last time it occurred on the Sunday before Lent. I tried a bunch of times to find out *that* little piece of trivia but with no success. So, if one of you wants to come up with that for me, I’d be indebted to you! (*Answer: 2010*)

A BRIEF History of Valentine’s Day

(*Taken from these two websites:

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/She-wolf_\(Roman_mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/She-wolf_(Roman_mythology))
2. <https://www.almanac.com/content/when-valentines-day-quotes-history>*)

Valentine’s Day has its roots in

✓ Roman mythology



Lupa the
She-Wolf,
nursing
Romulus
and Remus

This is “a symbol of Rome since ancient times and one of the most recognizable icons of ancient mythology”. (Quote and content taken from the first referenced website.)

→ *Lupa*, the She-Wolf, that legend attributes to nursing the twins, Romulus and Remus, after they’d been abandoned in the wild by order of a then-reigning king. *Lupa* brought them in to her cave-den, called the *Lupercal*, in which she raised them until they were discovered by the shepherd, *Faustulus*, who brought them back to civilization. Romulus would later kill his brother – so much for being civilized – and go on to be the founder of Rome and its first king, ca. 750 BC.

→ *Lupa* and the Roman god of agriculture, *Faunus*, were the “headliners” behind the Roman festival of fertility and agriculture, called *Lupercalia*. It was held in the early spring, the season of “sowing seeds”, and involved lots of fertility rites and celebrations that would draw...let’s say “criticism” in polite circles, even today!

✓ Roman historical legend surrounding the Emperor Claudius II’s killing of two priests of the name “Valentine” on Feb. 14th of different years in the 3rd century AD.

→ Legend has it that Emperor Claudius forbade his soldiers to marry b/c marriage made for poor “soldiering”. But these two priests married young people in love, anyway, to protect the men from serving in the Roman army. Hence, their demise at the hands of Claudius.

✓ Roman Catholic ecclesiology

→ In AD 469, then Pope Gelasius established Feb. 14th as the day in the church year to honor the martyrdom of these two, and the celebration of Valentine's Day was born.

→ In 1969, nearly 1500 years later, the R/C Church removed St. Valentine from the General Roman Calendar b/c of lack of reliable information about him.



While his feast day was done away with, St. Valentine remains a saint of the R/C Church. He is the patron saint of all things having to do with romantic love, youth, engagement, marriage, and...interestingly enough...bee keepers.

Now, it turns out in the Middle Ages, it was believed that birds paired couples in mid-February. Birds...bees...Valentine's Day...makes sense to me!



SERMON THOUGHTS

But, I think there's a much better way to link the Sunday before Lent with Valentine's Day and that is to consider in greater depth what love is all about and how God is the source of all love. That makes Valentine's Day a far less-exclusive celebration – one where happily-mated couples celebrate their union – and a much more-inclusive one, one in which all of us can participate.

(**Skit Guys* video here, in its entirety.*)

Lead-in: Reference to focusing on the Valentine's Day traditions in a "Platonic" way – from the theme statement in the 11 AM worship order:

→ A double entendre:

1. Non-physical love, pointing to
2. Plato's "ideals" and "forms": the ideal of love is divine love, emanating from God Himself, while the form is that which we imperfectly embody.

✓ While rich, life-giving, covenanted relationships are one expression of the love of God, the focus on Valentine's Day on that aspect of love removes from it the significance of the far deeper reality and experience of love that we were created to live by, with, and in.

→ We were created to live in love with God, first and foremost. (*Unpack the implications here in light of the video message.*)

→ Then, we were created with the capacity to share a semblance of that love with others. (*Unpack the implications here in light of the video

message, as well.*)

→ Pete Scazzero's depth and breadth of the love of Christ expressed in marriage and singleness.

This is the Gospel, people!

TO THE SCRIPTURES to CONCLUDE

^{16b} God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ^{17a} And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect.

¹⁹ We love...because he first loved us.

In light of that, and “birds and bees” aside, a Happy Valentine's Day to you, Friends, in the most meaningful of ways!

Let us pray...