

June 20, 2010  
John 15:1-17  
Creekside COB

### **'McLovin'**

**Two humorous observations from Bill Cosby's book, *Fatherhood*. He writes: Now that my father is a grandfather, he just can't wait to give money to my kids. But when I was his kid and I asked him for fifty cents, he would tell me the story of his life. How he got up at 5 A.M. when he was seven years old and walked twenty-three miles to milk ninety cows. And the farmer for whom he worked had no bucket, so he had to squirt the milk into his little hand and then walk eight miles to the nearest can. All for 5 cents a month. The result was that I never got my 50 cents.**

**But now he tells my children every time he comes into the house: 'Well, lets see how much money old Granddad has got for his wonderful kids.' And the minute they take money out of his hands I call them over to me and I snatch it away from them. Because that is MY money**

**In a recent marketing campaign, Anheuser-Busch company launched a Budweiser campaign where people who drink Budweiser were part of a group that loved.**

**The commercial depicts the Budweiser drinker as being a part of a community of love. To love Budweiser products was to be a part of a community of love.**

**T-shirts, the fastest selling gift items in the new "Budweiser" catalog a catalog devoted entirely to selling beer-branded merchandise is the**

**whole line of "I love you, man!" T-shirts, shorts, hats and signs.**

**Marketing people know the basic needs of people - they study them and they create marketing campaigns around their basic needs. It is like Maslow said in his hierarchy, we need acceptance and belonging, we need a community of love.**

**But I have a more true illustration of the community of love.**

**Byr's son Josh served in Iraq. When he came home, he could not find a sustainable job in Pittsburgh so he came out and lived with us while we were in Southern Indiana. Josh, who is now a correctional officer at Pendleton Correctional Facility, worked his first job in Indiana as a waiter in a local restaurant. That job introduced to him to a wonderful young woman who he is now married to. But Josh when he married Cat, short for Catherine, he wasn't marrying just her, he wasn't joining in a covenant with just her and God but he entered into a covenant with her and her children.**

**He didn't just enter a marriage but together with his wife he entered into a community of love. When his co-workers at the prison heard this they made him a T-shirt with the name 'McLovin.' To them, Josh was the epitome of what love meant. Josh in his own love entered into a community of love with his wife and her children and God enlarged His community.**

**That is Real Love. That is what Jesus says today right from the beginning. I am the Real Vine and My Father is the Farmer. The Spirit of God is the one who puts the care and love into the vine and the branches run from the vine producing fruit. A real love from God.**

**You know, the Indiana skies are the most beautiful. I mean the blue skies and the midnight blue at night. The colors are brilliant. The**

**sunsets are spectacular. The shades of reds, yellows and orange can't be replicated. As much as we humans try we can't replicate those colors. Crayola can't. Sherman Williams can't. We just can't. The only way we can replicate those colors would be if we take a patch from the midnight sky or the brilliant sunset and place it on a wall, or in metal for our cars. That is the way it is with love. There is no way we can love without the vine and the vinedresser or farmer.**

**God's love is real. Peterson's contemporary Message says that it is organic and intimate. Peterson is saying it is a pure love. A love that doesn't have any junk in it. A love that is unconditional and intimate - personal. A love that Anheuser Bush or any other company can replicate. It is only when we are part of the Vine - a part of the very nature of God - can we have a real love.**

**And out of the vine comes the abundance of fruit. Jesus says it is sure to be abundant. Out of the vine comes this wonderful flow of love. See Anheuser Bush claims that love flows from their product. It is a temporary flow. When the Budweiser runs out so does the love but when God's love flows it becomes more abundant not depleted. Love begins to flow out into the world into the places where we as a part of the community of love touch. Where our love flows out from us. Love replenishes love. Anheuser Bush can't claim that.**

**At Karen Eis's licensing she gave her testimony of the flow of love through the community of love. There was someone who may have owned a McLovin' t-shirt. She told a story of her family life growing up. Church was not a part of her family's story. She spoke about her life as a student athlete and one day as she was coming home from school, a man stopped and said aren't you Karen and I can't remember what her last name was but he said. I've seen you and what a good athlete you are and how you participate in sports and I want to invite you to a youth group event on Wednesdays at my church. I am the youth leader and I would like you to come. She said that conversation changed her life. That conversation made such a**

**difference because this person noticed her. This person cared enough to invite her to church. She said because of the way he shared Christ she was compelled to go. She begged her friend to take her even though the weather was inclement. She was living in Florida then and it was terribly rainy night. But she had to go there because she wanted to belong to this community of love .**

**A community of love is a place of real belonging and real acceptance. Where love flows out of the abundance of the love. That is God's community of love.**

**Before we came to Nappanee we were living in Southern Indiana and was ready to graduate. Our profiles were being circulated and we were going on interviews. We wanted to go back to Pennsylvania and serve in the Church of the Brethren there but every door was closed. We had great interviews and we thought for sure we would get something. But we didn't. And Nappanee church was a part of that interview season.**

**At the same time Byrl was working in a prison over on the west side of Indiana in Putnamville and the state had made me an offer to go to Rockville to serve as a chaplain in the women's facility. There just happened to be an opening there. They were so excited to have us as a chaplain couple serving in the prison system.**

**We had our interview with Nappanee and they called us right away and made us an offer. We weren't sure about it because we were going and sharing an income. Could we afford it? And also we didn't really want to stay here. We wanted to go to Pennsylvania. So, we decided to turn them down and go to the prison ministry and wait until we found a church to serve in the Eastern part of the country.**

**We began looking for places to live in that area. It was about 20 miles east of Terre Haute. I remember like it was yesterday. We**

**found this great place to live but something wasn't sitting in my spirit. I felt very much of a stirring but I couldn't identify it. It was the next morning in my prayer time that God gave to me in my spirit that we were to go to Nappanee and trust God for the provision.**

**I remember jumping up on the bed and saying to Byrl, "Hey, We are supposed to go to Nappanee." We talked about it and he felt sure that I knew we were to do that.**

**We had to call Herman back and tell him that we wanted to be reconsidered for the position.**

**Here is the point of the story. Once we began to make plans to move there, there was one important element that was missing. It was our connection to a church. The closest Church of the Brethren was an hour away. It was Christ our Shepherd over in Greenwood, Indiana. We would be disconnected. Jesus is saying here that when we are separated we can't produce a thing. We would be separated from the body of Christ though our Church of the Brethren family. Without a connection Jesus says we can't produce the fruit as sweet as we would when we were connected to His body. We would not be a part of a community of love.**

**To be a part of the community of love, we have to be connected to the body. Know this, all Christians need to be connected. It is the way we grow and sweeten.**

**A neighbor of mine took off with his family to see the country. When he returned, I asked how he enjoyed the vacation. He replied, "Have you ever spent 3 weeks in a mini-van with those you thought you loved?"**

**Because love is not for the faint-hearted. It is tough to love. I am sure**

**Josh found it quite the transition to go from a single man to a community of 8. And now they are expecting their second child - soon to have a community of 10. It is tough but God prunes and grows us to make our fruit of love even more succulent and more abundant in its flow.**

**I want to show now a scene from the movie 'Gran Torino.' Korean War vet Walt Kowalski played by Clint Eastwood doesn't much like how his life or his neighborhood has turned out. He especially doesn't like the people next door. Hmong immigrants from Southeast Asia. But events force Walt to defend those neighbors against a local gang that feeds on violence and fear.**

**The Hmong people are so grateful that they can't help but shower Walt with love. But he makes it difficult. It is only through their abundance that he learns the meaning of a community of love. They were not faint-hearted. He refers to them in all ways.**

**He suddenly realizes what it means to be a part of the vine. It is in this place that he gives the ultimate gift of love to them. As he sacrifices his life for theirs. He gives as Christ gave to us -- His sacrifice on the cross. It is through the cross of Christ that we are able to form this community of love.**

**We can live inside this community of love because God is the vine dresser or the farmer cultivating the love. As God is love and has loved us first.**

**It is in this community of love that we are all called to wear t-shirts that read McLovin.**