

Streetsville United Church
Sunday, Nov 14, 2010
Rev. John Tapscott

"THE GLUE THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER"

Colossians 3:14; Romans 8:38,39

I have here in my hand a round plastic vile and inside a tube of Krazy Glue. Have ever used Krazy Glue? It holds things together pretty well, and the bond lasts, too. You have to be careful not to get it on your forefinger or thumb, otherwise your fingers will be stuck together for a while. Oh, eventually the bond breaks with pressure and water, but you discover from personal experience that this is good stuff.

Today I want to talk about the spiritual glue that holds us together. And it's far stronger than crazy glue. The bond it forms is unbreakable. The glue that holds us together is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. I have two texts from the apostle Paul. Colossians 3:14, "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony," & Romans 8:38,39, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Let's start here. By the love of God in Jesus Christ God binds us to himself. This love is God's gift to us at baptism and it's our privilege to accept this love, to trust in this love and to live in the light of it. Paul writes that he is convinced that nothing in all creation will be able separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How could Paul write that he is convinced of this? Well, it was because of Christ. All the powers of evil and chaos were aimed at Christ when he died on the Cross and was buried. But the love of God proved stronger than these powers when God raised His Son from the grave to live forevermore. Paul knew and trusted God through Jesus Christ. So he knew that the same love that raised Jesus from the grave held him, too. He was convinced that no matter what happened, no power would be able to separate him from God's love.

David Read, a Presbyterian minister in New York City wrote an article, "What I Believe Most." During WWII, as a chaplain with the British Army, he was trapped with a thousand troops on a narrow street in a fishing village on the

coast of France. The street was on fire on both ends; there was no escape. Faced with the prospect of death or capture by the enemy, he discovered what he really believed.. He found that he believed absolutely in the God of love who would not him go, no matter what. Why was he so sure? "I can answer that in one word: Christ," wrote David Read, "It was Christ who was with us in that burning street just as he himself had passed through the fire of suffering and death to His resurrection life."

It's the same with us who trust Christ as Saviour and come to know him and abide in Him as he abides in us. We become convinced that we are bound to God by an unbreakable bond of love. Oh, there is much in life that may try to break that bond. Paul speaks of things like distress, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword. The early Christians may have known some of these more than we do. But we too experience hardship and distress and worry and loneliness and fear. They all seem to come between God and us, but in truth none of them has the power to separate us from God's love.

You see, this love by which God binds us to himself is not just for sunny, happy times. It's especially for tough times. That great hymn by George Matheson, "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go" was not written in an easy time. No, he wrote it in a time of personal suffering after his fiancé broke off their engagement because he was going blind. But in God's unbreakable love Matheson found comfort and strength. Knowing that we are held by the love of God in Jesus Christ enables us to hold our lives together and strengthens us to endure whatever life throws at us.

One thing that often seems to come between God and us is not out there. It's in us. It's our sin. The old Adam still rears up in Christian believers and we do the things we don't want to do and don't do the things we ought to do. And this sense of falling short seems to separate us from the love of God. We feel distant from Him. But don't trust your feelings on the matter. Trust God's word. Paul says in verse 34, "Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who intercedes for us." Paul is saying is that because Christ died for our sins and rose again, and we trust in Him, not even our sin can separate us from God's love, because God's Son has taken our sin upon himself. Earlier in Romans Paul says, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." So don't let your heart condemn you. In every situation you can trust this word of God, "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And if life cannot separate us from God's love, neither can death. For the

love of God in Jesus Christ is stronger than death and hell. We are children of God now and forever, heirs of immortality and eternal life. And the same love that holds us also holds our loved ones in heaven and will bring us together again in the age to come. The glue God uses to bind us to himself is the love he gives us in Christ Jesus our Lord. And that bond cannot be broken, because God who defeated every power on the Cross, will not let it be broken.

And then secondly, love is the glue which binds us to one another. Paul writes in Colossians 3:14: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

You see the love of God not only holds us, but also enables us to love one another. Jesus said to his followers, "Love one another as I have loved you." In Paul's great analogy, he tells us to "put on love, clothe ourselves with it." As you put on your clothes every morning put on the love of God in Jesus Christ. Throw it around you like a cloak.

Now in this passage Paul was upholding love as the glue which binds people together in the church. But love is the glue which also binds us to one another in our all precious relationships - in our homes and marriages and deep friendships. Paul writes, "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive." That is the nature of the love which binds us together. Of course, we won't always agree with one another, or please one another, or treat one another as we should. But we love one another even when we are unlovable. Parents know that you love your children no matter what. This kind of love is not easy. It requires God's help and Christ's presence to love in this way. "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Now the perfect harmony may have to wait until heaven, but the love of God in Jesus Christ, even worn imperfectly by imperfect people, can hold things together. This love overcomes many faults. This love heals and it transforms.

I think of the man, who year after year, went to the nursing home to visit his wife who had suffered a serious stroke. Once every so often she would squeeze his hand and give a brief smile but that was it. She couldn't speak. But every day he would come, push her down the hall in her wheelchair and take her outside in nice weather, feed her, sing their old favorite songs to her, hold her hand, read her stories, and give her a good night kiss before leaving.

Then I think of the father in Jesus' famous story. Every day as he went out to

the mail box he took a glance down the road in the direction of the far country. Every night he prayed that his prodigal son might come home. After years of this he still prayed and still looked, but hope was burning low. The far land had quite a hold on the boy. Then one day as he took his usual look, he saw a bedraggled figure walking slowly toward him. At such a distance he couldn't see clearly who it was. But as he squinted against the bright sunlight and the figure drew closer, the father recognized his own dear son. Suddenly all else was forgotten. Letters and bills flew into the air as father tightened the belt around his cloak and ran down the road to his son, throwing his arms around him and welcoming him home.

A woman came into her counsellor's office, smiling, a change from her previous visits. Weeks before she had come to the counsellor, in despair from years of living with her husband who was a gambling addict. She expressed a desperate desire to be rid of this man who was wrecking their home life and marriage. Over the weeks she had made some progress, but the burden weighed heavily upon her.

But this day she explained to the counsellor that while praying and reflecting upon her life she had thought back to the beginning of their marriage. She remembered how much in love they were and how charming and exciting he was to be with. She said, "I have seen all over again the marvellous qualities of my husband and they are still there under all the muck and mess of his gambling, and they can be brought out again. I have seen again the man I loved, not the man I hate. I will fight for him." And so she did, with faith and courage and love, and in time and with great struggle, he became again the man he once had been.

By his love in Jesus Christ God binds us to himself and by that same love we bind ourselves to one another. This love is God's gift to us and grows within us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony." "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor principalities, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."