

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Easter 6
May 26, 2019

Replacing Our Stick-On Emotions
John 14:23-29

Many years ago, advertisers discovered an important truth: Emotion sells products. Back in 1921, Palmolive asked women the question “Would your husband marry you again?”

With this ad, the soap-maker was tapping into a fear of isolation and loneliness. The hidden message was “Without Palmolive, you are going to be all alone.”

Today, we see ads for Axe deodorant reflecting a desire that most young men have — they want to be irresistible to women. We watch ads for Heineken beer that make a connection with our longing for world peace. Emotion sells products.

When we take a step back and think about these ads, we realize that we are being manipulated. “It’s all *stick-on* emotion,” write Dan and Chip Heath in *Fast Company* magazine. This is a good expression because it communicates how thin and artificial the emotion is. Take some fear of isolation, and stick it on Palmolive soap. Take some sexual desire, and stick it on Axe deodorant. Take some longing for world peace, and stick it on Heineken beer.

We are reminded of how advertisers are especially good at using stick-on love against mothers. Most fabric softeners, for instance, sell their product by convincing moms that they are not really softening their family's clothes — they are telling their children, “I love you.” A bottle of Downy is a bottle of love. Dan and Chip Heath know the truth, however. Moms, if you *really* want to show your love, give your kids unlimited texting.

We need to find ways to replace stick-on love with authentic love. That is exactly what Jesus is calling us to do in the Gospel of John. Jesus doesn't want us to practice stick-on love, an emotion that is only a word to be slapped on something. He wants us to replace this fake and manipulative emotion with a real one; he wants us to go deep and show our love in action by really keeping his word.

On the night before his death on the cross, Jesus says to his disciples, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.” There is an unmistakable connection here between loving Jesus and keeping his word. This is the exact opposite of stick-on love — it is an emotion that is grounded in deeds.

Fortunately, there are some companies today that are using real emotion in their advertising, instead of stick-on sentiments. And these companies can teach us a few lessons about what it means to put love into action.

Toms Shoes has a simple approach to selling its footwear: Buy a pair of shoes, and it will send a second pair to a child who needs it. In one recent year, the company sent about 300,000 pairs of shoes to the developing world.

That's authentic love, not stick-on love. Many serious health problems can be prevented by decent footwear, including by blocking parasites that enter a child's body through bare feet. Toms Shoes has a passion for helping needy children, and because of this authentic emotion, they sell a lot of shoes by word of mouth. They spend far less on marketing than other shoe companies, because they don't have to shout about how great they are.

Same with Newman's Own. This brand started as a vanity project, giving Paul Newman a way to show off his salad dressing. But it has grown into a powerful brand that generates more than \$100 million in revenue every year. And here's the kicker: All of the company's profits have always gone to charity — more than a quarter-billion dollars to date. People buy Newman's Own salad dressing because it tastes good *and* they like what the brand stands for — authentic love, not a stick-on emotion.

But Jesus knows that good deeds, by themselves, only go so far.

Eventually we are going to lose our way or burn out, unless we receive some help from above. In John 14, Jesus goes on to tell his disciples, "I have said these things to you while I am still with you.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

Jesus promises his followers that the Holy Spirit will be sent to them to help them recall what Jesus said while he was with them. The Spirit will keep them faithful and strong, and remind them that their relationship with Jesus is steadfast and secure.

The power of the Holy Spirit is felt most strongly in community, especially in small groups that meet together for support and prayer and acts of service. In Fairfax, Virginia, the Midlife Men on a Mission is a group of guys who have been traveling to Honduras together since 2004. There is authentic love in this group, love that has been deepened by talking and laughing and working together over a series of weeklong mission trips. This is a love that now includes their partners in Honduras — people they join for worship, construction projects and even fiestas in their homes.

These men have an Advocate in the Holy Spirit, a power that reminds them of all that Jesus has said. The Spirit binds them together in a project that probably would have run its course if it were based only on human effort. But with the help of the Spirit, they remain faithful and strong, connected to Jesus and each other and committed to the work Jesus has called them to do.

Although small groups are valuable, they are not a quick fix for the problems we face each day. This is why Jesus says to his followers, “Peace I leave

with you; my peace I give to you.” His peace is unlike the world’s peace, for when he says “I do not give to you as the world gives,” he isn’t promising them peace *from* trouble but peace *in the midst of* trouble. Trouble is going to come — Jesus knows it. In fact, it would hit him hard in his arrest, crucifixion and death.

Christian speaker Ron Hutchcraft tells the story of an art gallery that ran a competition for painters, offering a prize for the best painting on the subject of peace. The prize-winner was a real surprise: It showed the ocean in a violent storm, with lightning in the sky and waves crashing into cliffs by the shore. So where was the peace? You had to look carefully. Halfway up the cliff was a bird’s nest tucked into a hollow in the rock, and there a mother bird was sitting on the nest with her little babies safely underneath her. That was peace — not the absence of a storm, but safety in the middle of the storm.

When Jesus says “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid,” he is predicting that his followers are going to encounter storms — traumatic circumstances that will test their faith and their resolve.

But rather than allow them to remain in a state of denial, Jesus reminds them that his upcoming departure fits what he had said to them before: “You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’” Jesus promises to come to us and give us real peace, not a superficial stick-on emotion.

Jesus concludes this passage in the same way that he started it — by talking about love. “If you loved me,” he says to his disciples, “you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.” Once again, he is not talking about a shallow stick-on love, but about a deep and authentic emotion. Perhaps Jesus is wondering: Can my disciples set aside their own personal preferences so that when I go to God the Father, greater things can be accomplished?

We face the very same questions today. We don’t have Jesus sitting beside us in human form. But we do have the promise that when we love Jesus and keep his word, then he will come to us and make his home with us. Jesus visits us through the Holy Spirit, a force that teaches us everything Jesus wants us to know, and gives us a powerful peace in the midst of trouble. Is this something we can accept? And if so, will we let God use this channel to do powerful things through us?

Each of us is challenged to accept this gift of deep and authentic love, one that comes to us after Jesus departs this earth to be with God the Father. Palmolive soap will never cure our isolation and loneliness — instead, the power of the Holy Spirit will do it, working in the Christian community. And Heineken beer won’t bring us a sense of peace, despite its inspiring commercials about our global community. Instead, Christ will give us true peace, in the middle of the troubles of each day.

Our challenge is to peel off the stick-on emotions we see all around us and replace them with authentic love. This starts with parents who work hard and sacrifice for their children — at home, at church, at school, in the community. It continues with men, women and youths who join small groups and experience the power of the Holy Spirit as they meet, worship and serve together. It grows as Christians throughout the world commit themselves to keeping Christ's word, showing his love and sharing his peace.

Jesus does not want us to simply slap our faith on the world. Instead, he wants us to go deep, be authentic and put his love into action.