



Rev. Meshach Kanyion, Friendship United Methodist Church

Greetings!

Please read [1 John 4](#)

This passage poetically speaks of the interior structure that holds the community of faith together. The structure is love. Love is a gift given by God to the community of believers. It has been the central place of connection from the beginning of the gatherings of early believers in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and continues to hold together Christian community until this very day. Going even further, love is the distinguishing factor of authentic Christian community. A community without love is not of God.

Several passages in this text are familiar and have been touch points and values held by believers since its writing.



:7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

:11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.

:13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

:16b God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and

whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

: 19 We love because he first loved us.

:21 The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

These are just a few of the wonderful words that hold us together as Christian community. But not everyone embraces them or knows how to live by them. On Tuesday night we were treated to a wonderful presentation at Church of the Saviour by the Rev. Meshach Kanyion regarding race in our culture and in our church. This event was sponsored by our ORV Racial Justice Team. The evening was outstanding, and I invite you to check out these videos where he has shared some of his own experiences and insights.

- [Video 1 - Being reported as a suspicious person](#)
- [Video 2 - Renouncing white supremacy](#)
- [Video 3 - Pay attention to your rituals !](#)
- [Video 4 - How anger helps work towards justice](#)
- [Video 5 - Against racism: Lessons from John Woolman](#)
- [Video 6 - Caste and the Kingdom of God](#)

Rev. Kanyion reminded the audience of the importance of the text from 1 John and the impact of fear on us individually and corporately. Fear has its way with us inside the church. Fear has its way with us in every aspect of our life. What struck me upon reflection is the notion of safe places where I can face my fear. No one likes to be hurt. There is plenty of trauma that is inflicted upon the human community every day. But is the church a safe place to face our fears? Is it a safe place to ask our questions? Do we have willing ears and open hearts?

I wonder about this because I have experiences too. As a pastor I'm amazed to see that the church is not a safe place for many. I have always tried to make church a safe place. Questions are good. Wondering is very good. But in some segments, there are only right/wrong answers in the church setting. People are treated with disrespect for their questions. And some of this disrespect has resulted in lasting traumas for individuals and groups of people. Trauma has been inflicted upon people inside the church for many things. However, never as monumental as forks. Yes forks.

A member of the congregation I was serving once came into my office, mad as hops. The person said, 33 forks are missing in the church kitchen and what are you going to do about it! I tried to use my empowerment skills – “equipping the laity for the works of ministry” (I remembered the bishop said that as she was laying her hands on my head). So I suggested a trip to the store to purchase new forks, but I was flatly rejected! “No,” I was told, “We need to know who 'stole' the forks and get them back!”

Fear – fear is a real thing. Fear says you are deficient in taking care of God's kitchen because 33 forks are missing. No one would ever say that. But fear speaks loudly in our ears! When our world view and frames of reference are threatened – watch out! When the lies that we believe about ourselves seem real, oh a lot of damage can be done. When faced with such a situation, could love be the answer?

The question the text raises for me connects with this notion of love – Is it possible to live in the perfect love that the Spirit sustains and fear at the same time? Of course, I know the answer to the question. At least, I think I do.

But the next question is – Have I ever lived in perfect love? Mr. Wesley had a question about that, included in the Historic Questions¹. If not, have I ever really been a Christian *inna* my heart as the old hymn says? Because I sang the words ***Lord, I want to be a Christian....***

There is so much to learn about myself and others. Fear can trip us up and fear is the ***Tempter's Power!*** Thank you Rev. Kanyon for helping me reflect on my life and reminding me of the important power of this text.

¹Par. 336, Book of Discipline, The United Methodist Church, The United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, TN, 2016.

Peace,



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