

Sally Hammel: Good morning.

Congregation: Morning.

Congregation: Welcome to morning prayers. Will you please stand as you're able and join me in the responsive reading in your Black Appleton Psalter, number 67 on page 34.

Sally Hammel: "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us."

Congregation: "That Thy way may be known on earth, Thy saving power among all nations."

Sally Hammel: "Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee."

Congregation: "Let the nations because glad and sing for Thou shall judge the peoples in equity, and guide the nations upon earth."

Sally Hammel: "Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee."

Congregation: "The earth has yielded its increases. God, our God, has blessed us."

Sally Hammel: "God has blessed us; let all the ends of the earth fear Him!"

Chorus: (singing)

LaTosha Brown: Good morning. (singing)

LaTosha Brown: Ephesians 5:2 says, "And walk in the way of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." I like to think of myself as an ambassador of love. I spend a lot of time thinking about what is love, what is its power, and how does it live in me? How do I make that walk? And I don't think my family ever sat me and said, "This is the definition of love," or "This is the concept of love." But I know that they taught me what it felt like. I knew what it made me feel. I knew what I could see. And I also knew when it wasn't around.

LaTosha Brown: And so, one of my earliest memories was actually with my grandmother. My grandmother, on the first of every month when she got her social security check, she would take me on a bus, and we would go down in Mobile, and she would pay her bills, and we would go to Woolworth. And we would get to Woolworth, she would order me a piece of German Chocolate Cake and a glass of milk. And I would sit there and drink it and eat it. And she would have so much joy on her face, and I never understood after a while why grandmother wouldn't get a piece of cake. Well, she said, "Well, baby, I can't get a piece of cake because I've got sugar." Some of y'all know that as diabetes. She called it sugar. And she said, "But I get so much joy just watching you eat that cake." My grandmother was that demonstration of love for me.

- LaTosha Brown: And so, often times, I'm sitting and I'm thinking to myself, "What is this power of love? And do I really believe that walking the way of love could be transformative, not only to myself, but to the world?" And then I think about what 1 John 4:16 says, "And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in them." And I think about that oftentimes we think of God and love as elements outside of ourselves when, in fact, I believe that it lives in us both, and they're one in the same.
- LaTosha Brown: And so when I think about, what does it mean to walk a life of love? Imagine what that could mean if we are thinking about changing and doing better. Imagine. I often talk about the need for this country to radically imagine a New America. And what would that American look like if we walked in love? Perhaps it could be a criminal justice system that would look like it was based in love and redemption, instead of perpetual punishment. What would food systems look like that were designed to provide nourishment for people, and instead of being driven by profit? Imagine a health care system that was driven by love, healing, and physical transformation instead of being centered around sickness. Imagine what would it mean to walk a path of love.
- LaTosha Brown: And so I'm pondering, and looking, and thinking about, what are some of the messages that I've seen in scripture? And 1 Corinthians 16:14 says something very similar. It says, "Do everything in love." What does that mean? Could that mean that employers would seek a production increase on their productivity, but also make sure that they give those benefits to the employees? Which means they might work shorter hours, they may make more money, and it creates benefits for them to actually spend time with their families and build healthy lives.
- LaTosha Brown: What if we did everything in love? Could we solve climate change, eradicate poverty, eliminate racism, redistribute wealth, defeat sexism, and spur innovation? What are the possibilities in a world that we did everything in love? What are the possibilities in our own life if we walk the path of love?
- LaTosha Brown: I found myself in the Deep South having to walk in places that I was neither valued or appreciated. I had to learn how to walk in this life in a black female body in rooms that oftentimes were unwelcoming, unfriendly, and unsafe. I had to learn how to walk through a world steeped in sexism, elitism, and racism without losing myself or my mind. It was the practice of love that got me through. I had to learn how to walk in a way of love in spite of those challenges. Oftentimes, instead of expecting to find love in a room, I had to take it with me and generate it as I sat there.
- LaTosha Brown: And so, I offer that it is my walk with love that gave me a deeper understanding and a deeper ability to be able to love others as I love myself, that it was my walk with love that helped open up the possibilities of what would it mean to

have a liberated future in which all human beings were treated with dignity and respect?

LaTosha Brown: And so, as I get ready to go to my seat, I would say that we know that from 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, we know that the walk of love requires patience and kindness. "It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It's not rude, it's not self-seeking, nor is it easily angered. It keeps no record of wrong doing. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."

LaTosha Brown: And so I leave you with four thoughts: One, Imagine a world without sexism, racism, inequalities, and injustices. Two, believe with me that we can eradicate these barriers and create new models that move us on a path of love. Three, dream with me about new solutions and innovative ways of shifting all of the resources on this planet in a way that says, "We love ourselves and humanity." And four, walk with me that we can do everything in the spirit of love and that if we do those things in the spirit of love, we will not fail because love never fails.

Sally Hammel: Amen.

Crowd, unison: Amen.

Sally Hammel: Please join me in offering the Lord's Prayers printed on the reverse in your Order of Worship. "Our Father ..."

Crowd, unison: "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Sally Hammel: Will you please stand as you are able and join in singing the hymn, Immortal Love Forever Full, number 223 in your Red Crimson Hymnal?

Congregation: (singing)

Sally Hammel: Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Congregation: Amen.