

I would like to begin the sermon with a strange question. Are you more like a salmon or a jellyfish? maybe you don't know much about them. I'll describe each one and then you can decide.

Salmon begin their lives in the freshwater rivers of the frigid Northwest. Not long after they're born, they begin a long swim downstream. Their destination is the ocean. It is here that they spend the majority of their adult lives. Then something strange happens. At some point the adult salmon begins to swim back home.

Though they may have swum thousands of miles from that original river location, they head back home. They swim upstream, against the current of the river. They leap out of the water to overcome waterfalls and other barriers impeding their progress. After an incredible effort the fish spawn and then die. The new salmon are soon born and repeat the process.

Does that describe you? Does your life have a mission? Are you going in a specific direction and are you willing to face all the obstacles to get there? If so, you're like the salmon.

Then there's the jellyfish. There are numerous species of these yucky-looking little creatures. Some of them are tiny. Others have tentacles that can be measured in feet. Jellyfish are born in the ocean and die there too. They have limited movement, but never really use that ability to go in any particular destination. They're moved along primarily by the wind and waves and tides. They drift about stinging and surviving.

Are you more like a jellyfish than a salmon? You just kind of float from here to there. You're carried by circumstances or other people's plans, but you really have no particular mission of your own.

The difference between salmon and jellyfish is the same as the difference between people. Some have a mission. Most just drift.

That kind of life is that you don't need to accomplish anything of significance. However you reach your final days, you scratch your head and ask, "What was it all for anyway?" Jellyfish people never find nor fulfill the reason for which they were created.

Then there are those who have a mission. They can look back with satisfaction because they discovered their life's purpose and went full force in that direction. That kind of living is one of the secrets of success. Successful people find and embark on their life's purpose.

Today the Bible teaches us our mission is LOVE. Listen to the passage as the Apostle Paul writes it to the Corinthian Christians:

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.

Loving like God is our life mission. However, we are easily confused when it comes to the whole issue of love. Much of it has to do with the way we use the word. A modern dictionary lists 28 various uses for the word: tender affection, warm attachment, intimate passion, strong predication, amorous benevolence, and so on. When we say, "we love our family", "we love our job", "we love our church", "we love going to vacation", and "we love everything", we use the word as an interchangeable word.

The Corinthian Christians also were confused with the meaning of LOVE. That's why Paul was writing to correct their misunderstanding of what it means to love.

The Corinthians knew what love was. Actually, they had a couple of different words they used regularly to communicate the idea of love. First, there was the Greek word, *Eros* which indicates erotic or romantic love. Another word, *Phileo* means "brotherly" love rather like a fond affection. That's why Philadelphia is called the city of brotherly love.

Paul uses a different word when he writes of love. He uses a new word for a new idea, and it's a word not used outside the New Testament. The word Paul uses is *Agape*. The meaning is being sacrificial, self-denial, and unconditional.

Jesus used the word. In John's Gospel, after the resurrection, Jesus comes along the seashore and calls the disciples who are out fishing. They get to shore and Jesus has cooked them breakfast. After breakfast, Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" Jesus repeated His question to him three times. He used the Greek word *Agape*, which refers to unconditional love God shows us. Both times, Peter responded with "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you," using the Greek word *Phileo*, which refers more to a friendship type of love. It seems that Jesus is trying to get Peter to understand that he must love Jesus unconditionally in order to be the leader God is calling him to be. The third time Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" in John 21:17, He uses the word *Phileo*, and Peter again responds with "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you," again using *Phileo*. We could unpack all the reasons Peter answered the way he did, but the point is that Jesus was stretching Peter to move him from *Phileo* love to *Agape* love, unconditional love.

Jesus invites us to learn *Agape* love, unconditional love through our life journey. It's the love that we're supposed to have for our spouse and children. It's the love

that we're supposed to have for others. It's not the kind of love the world is very familiar with.

Jesus gave us a new mission statement, you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. Do you know God loves you? Do you know how much Jesus loves you? If so, here's the mission. Love one another as

God Jesus loves you through Jesus Christ. Let me ask the question we shared above, Are you more like a salmon or a jellyfish? Which one would you like to choose for your life journey?