

“We love because God first loved us.”

1 John 4:19

Scholar, teacher, novelist, and poet Robert Penn Warren once told a reporter that “a young man’s ambition is to get along in the world and make a place for himself. Half your life goes that way... then, if you’re lucky, you make terms with life and you get released.”

That word *released* captures something profound about the Christian life. For much of our lives we feel the pressure to prove ourselves, to build something that will last, to secure our place in the world. Yet the deeper truth we eventually discover is that life’s real meaning is not found in the legacy we construct for ourselves, but in the relationships we nurture, the love we share, and the good we leave behind for others.

In other words, the life that matters most is a life shaped by love.

The Christian faith tells us that love is not merely a virtue among many others. Scripture goes even further. In the First Letter of John we are told that **God is love**. Love is not simply something God does. Love belongs to the very nature of God’s being.

But God’s love is different from the love we often see in the world. Human love sometimes becomes self-focused. We love because it makes us feel fulfilled or affirmed. God’s love moves in the opposite direction. God loves not for God’s own benefit, but so that the beloved might flourish. As Jesus says, God’s desire is that we might “have life, and have it abundantly.”

Easter is the ultimate expression of that love.

On the cross we see the depth of God’s self-giving love, the One who lays down his life for others. In the resurrection we see the power of that love, a love stronger than death itself. Easter tells us that life shaped by love is not wasted. It is eternal.

The church exists to live out that love in visible ways. As the hands and feet of Christ, we are called to embody a different vision of life than the one offered by a restless world. In this community we learn to care for one another, to serve our neighbors, and to practice the kind of self-giving love that reflects the heart of God.

And when we live this way, something remarkable happens. We discover that we ourselves are “released.” Released from the endless pressure to prove ourselves. Released from the illusion that life is about securing our own place. Released instead into the freedom of loving as God has loved us.

May God bless you and your homes this Easter season. May the peace and joy of the risen Christ fill your hearts as you gather with family and friends. And may we remember always that we were created in the image of the One who is love, and that in loving one another we reflect the very life of God.

Yours in Christ,
Kregg