For those of you who grew up or have lived through the 60’s, I’m sure you probably have heard of the song “*All You Need Is Love*” by the Beatle’s. How many of you remember that? The lyrics of the song were written by John Lennon echoing the sentiment of the society at the time, when human relations and global affair were in a bit of a turmoil. Some of the lyrics of the song go like this:

*There's nothing you can do that can't be done.
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung.
Nothing you can say, but you can learn
How to play the game
It's easy.*

 *Nothing you can make that can't be made.
No one you can save that can't be saved.
Nothing you can do, but you can learn
How to be you in time
It's easy.*

***All you need is LOVE, all you need is LOVE,
All you need is LOVE, LOVE. LOVE is all you need.***

 Even though this song hit the top of the Billboard chart in 1967, the interpretation of the lyrics were received with mixed reactions. On one hand, many embraced it enthusiastically that LOVE is ultimately what saves us and what it all boils down to….that is, if we can hold on to that LOVE amongst us that we still have a chance to make it through the difficult time. That’s the optimistic interpretation. While on the other hand, some took it cynically and apathetically that LOVE is all there is left in a hopeless world that offers us a distraction or an escape from the reality of the problems of the world. There are always two sides of the coin.

These two seemingly contrasting attitudes overshadow not only the sentiment of the time back 50+ years ago, but to some degree of what is happening in our society and our time today. Some advocate for LOVE that can bridge a fractured and a broken society asking “Can’t we all just get along?” while others question and challenge the motives and intent of the others. It’s either one extreme or the other, with both sides unwilling to seek their common ground and reconcile with one another. Perhaps the sentiments of the song still echo in our hearts. *All we need is LOVE, and LOVE is all we need.*

Indeed, LOVE is a very powerful term and it can be interpreted in very different ways, both in our secular and spiritual sense. The state of being LOVED can also be complicated. It is definitely not one-size-fits-all. What works for some, may not work for others. Our human-to-human LOVE may be redefined or fine-tuned over time, but one thing we do know for sure is that God’s LOVE for us remains steadfast and unwavering.

In the gospel passage that we just read from John, Jesus gave us this new set of commandment “***love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you****.”[[1]](#footnote-1)* The LOVE that Jesus was referring to is the “agape”, the unconditional, devotional and irreplaceable kind of love. A love that is more rewarding to give than to receive. It is a love that reflects upon God’s ultimate sacrificial love for humanity.

**Whenever we see someone in need**, do we see that person as a friend rather than someone whom we look down upon with pity? **Likewise, when we have fallen onto hard time and experienced failures and setbacks in life**, do others come to our aid by going out of their ordinary ways? NOW that’s LOVE! The question is, how do we reciprocate that kind of love and keep this cycle of giving and this dialogue of grace going? **Or** **when we see acts of injustice being served and evil happening all around,** do we look the other way and pretend that things will work itself out or do not apply to us. Do we stand up for what is right? **Have we failed to demonstrate God’s love and compassion with our apathy?**

 In the passage that we read earlier in John, Jesus summarized his whole earthly mission with one word “**LOVE**”. When we demonstrate love to others, we are simply reflecting God’s love that is implanted in us. As I mentioned earlier, to love someone unconditionally is the hardest thing for us to do, especially to love someone who have done you wrong or when you don’t see things eye-to-eye. But that’s exactly the challenge what God has placed upon us. **The greater the sacrifice in LOVE, the greater its reward.**

 **As Jesus said, *“No one has greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”* God has commissioned us to bear fruits and to plant the seeds of LOVE among God’s children for generations to come.** Sometimes our enduring suffering may pave the way and plant the seeds of the fruits of our future. We trust that God is ultimately in control and that the truth and justice shall prevail at the end, no matter what the circumstances there may be. Something good may come out at the end in the name of LOVE.

 For those of you who have been keeping up with the news, earlier this week, the two black men who were arrested at a local Starbucks reached a settlement with the city of Philadelphia – the City of Brotherly LOVE, for a [symbolic $1 each](http://fortune.com/2018/05/02/starbucks-arrest-philadelphia-black-men/). In exchange, the city pledged to established a $200,000 fund that would help develop programs for young entrepreneurship in the city, especially among the persons of color. Starbucks has also planned to close all of its 8,000 stores here in the US for a day, with approximately 175,000 of its employees, in order to conduct in-house cultural sensitivity, implicit bias and stereotype trainings.

 Both sides agreed that the issue at hand regarding racial profiling in our society today, is just the tip-of-an-iceberg of a much larger and systemic epidemic that we are facing today. Both Donte Robinson and Rashon Nelson made it clear that, despite their public humiliation and trauma that they had to endure, they were NOT looking to strike a fortune by suing the City or Starbucks. But instead they want to see something “good” coming out of a “bad” situation.

 When asked about what do they hope to get out of this event, they simply replied, **“*We took a negative and turn it into a positive. We can keep moving forward like we truly want to. The most important thing is the foundation. The fact that we have a seat at the table, to work on reforms to be included in racial bias training. And hopefully other companies will take what*** [***Starbucks***](http://fortune.com/fortune500/starbucks/) ***is putting into perspective, and they’ll follow.”***

 Unfortunately, this latest incident reflects, to some degree, the current sentiment of our society and our nation that is still much divided over various issues of our times, just like what we experienced 50 years ago. We all have our own cultural bias and stereotypes to some degree, even amongst those who are of the “so called” minority population. **The question is not how we can fix the problem of our society with a simple solution or any monetary settlement, but rather what initiatives are we willing to take up, on our individual parts, in order to make this dream a reality.**

 What are WE willing to change in terms of our attitudes and what we do on a daily basis that can incorporate change and engage in mutual love and respects towards one another. We have come so far since the 1960’s, yet there is so much that still left to be done [or undone and dismantle]. Once again, the lyrics of the Beatle’s song echo in our hearts and motivates us towards a new horizon of hope…

***All we need is LOVE, all we need is LOVE,
All we need is LOVE, LOVE. LOVE is all we need.***

In a moment, we will once again come before the Table of LOVE that Christ as set before us. We rekindle our communal relationship that we have with Christ, as well as our relationship with our neighbors. We remember Christ’s command for us to “***love one another as Christ has loved us*.”** We come not because we are worthy or “perfect” by our own rights or personal achievement. We come because of God’s reconciling love and grace extended towards all of us sinners of this world.

 Even when we have had our differences among ourselves and have sinned against God, by God’s grace and through our confession, we too have been invited to be a part of this dialogue and to sit at the same table in communion with Christ, where no one is a stranger but as friends. **We come, therefore, as a people chosen by God’s grace and called by His LOVE.**

 **In the midst of uncertainties, hardships, and challenges in a fractured society, God has called us to stand firm with our faith, integrity, and hope, while exercising Christ’s extraordinary LOVE and grace.**

May we respond to God’s calling by abiding in His love through the Vine. Let us turn things that are negative into something that is positive and bear fruits for God’s kingdom.  ***God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in [us]. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. 19 We love because God first loved us.[[2]](#footnote-2)***

 In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *John 15:12-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *I John 4:16-19* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)