

What's love got to do with it?

John 15:9-17

TITLE SLIDE

TITLE SLIDE WITH SOUND

TIME TO FIND SOME VOLUNTEERS

I've given you all a Rolo. Do you like Rolos (yes). Excellent. Now have a look at this video clip.

ROLO SKIPPY ADVERT

ROLO ADVERT

Yes, do you love someone enough to give them your last Rolo. So there you have a Rolo, just one. Do you love someone enough to give them your Rolo and they are here. If you do, I'd like you to give your Rolo to them - and come back here when you're finished. The rest of you can now eat your Rolo and sit down.

Now those of you who were generous are going to be rewarded double - you can have two Rolos! Yes, this is a morning of unexpected things.

Actually I gave my wife this silver Rolo one VALENTINE'S DAY. It was my little token to say I loved her. Tomorrow I'm sure some of you will be giving Valentine's CARDS AND GIFTS. If you've still not gone and got something, here are a few things I wouldn't recommend as a romantic gesture:

WHAT NOT TO GET YOUR VALENTINE

TESCO VALUE VALENTINE CARD

POUNDLAND GIFT VOUCHER

PLASTIC FLOWERS

A BLOCK OF CHOCOLATE YOU PLAN TO SHARE.

We have a God who is a God of love and because He loves us He wants us to have the best gifts. He doesn't wait until Valentine's Day. He's already given us the gift, all we have to do is accept it.

JOHN 3:16

We'll talk some more about this in a few minutes.

CROSS

TITLE

TITLE WITH SOUND

UNDER 8s ACTIVITY

Valentine's Day. We all know what it is and what it stands for. Or do we? Well, I think I would preface this by saying

THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM Here's a video clip.

VIDEO CLIP

THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM

I love watching illusionists. We all saw the man being sawn in half. I don't think anybody seriously thought it was an accident. We get left asking; how did he do that? Clue: what can you do with a contortionist and a legless dwarf?

I found myself asking similar sorts of questions when I started to look at this character St Valentine who is regarded as many by the PATRON SAINT OF ROMANCE. Because the whole idea of a patron saint of romance looks like a big illusion. Look at history and it's pretty thin on facts and a connection between Valentine and romance.

WHICH ONE The main problem is that there were three St Valentines. Valentine of Rome, Valentine of Interamna, and Valentine of Africa. Valentine's Day probably refers to Valentinus of Rome but we know virtually nothing of any of them. There isn't much connection to romance at all. Valentinus of Rome was executed by Claudius II for illegally marrying people and trying to preach the gospel to the Emperor but that story probably isn't true.

14th FEBRUARY

Down the ages Christians have celebrated great Christian men and Valentine is no exception and February 14th was made St Valentine's Day in 496 - but which one - or was it all of them? So how did this day celebrating someone we know almost nothing about get to become a celebration of love, marriage and romance named after Valentine?

MIDDLE AGES

We don't know. It's all smoke and mirrors. Some say it was because February 14th coincided with pagan celebrations of love and romance. All we do know is that by the middle ages people celebrated St Valentine's Day as a day of romance, made famous by poets such as this man, Geoffrey Chaucer. I might add the Catholic Church do not hold February 14th as a saint's day for St Valentine - or any day. Valentines has been a folk tradition, not a religious one.

CASHING IN

But Valentines Day is hugely popular - why? Not because of religion but of cold hard cash. In the USA and then in Britain, card printers needed a money spinner to relieve their post-Christmas slump and here was a nice folksy tradition to latch on to and commercialise. Today it's big business. It's just a gimmick.

So if you were coming here today to celebrate St Valentine as someone who reflects love and romance, then you've just discovered that it's not a religious festival and in the 21st Century it's a gimmick to make money. It sounds like one but it's all an illusion, elaborate and expensive.

SO WHY BOTHER WITH VALENTINE? Have I just wasted an hour of our time on a traditional commercialised civil festival?

THINGS AREN'T ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM. There is a great story to celebrate these three men for. There is something about St Valentine (all three of them) and love. As Christians we always celebrate those that have gone before us and who have borne testimony to Jesus. And these guys did. We learn a vast amount about love from remembering the names of any or all of these Valentines. Why?

ALL THREE WERE MARTYRS

All loved Jesus so much that they paid the ultimate price and were persecuted and died. It's the only thing we can say for sure about all three men. They literally put their lives on the line because they were prepared to stand out as Christians. All of them died at the latter part of the third century in the last great persecutions before Christianity was legalised.

JOHN 15:13

Jesus said The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them. These men proved this in their lives by dying for Jesus and because they were prepared to stand with other believers. Their love was defined by their preparedness to die if necessary. And die they did.

And Jesus was their example: God has shown how much He loves us - IT WAS WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS THAT CHRIST DIED FOR US. God loved us so much that He sent His only Son. And what happened to Jesus. He died. Why? So that we could know God eternally. Here's another verse.

WE LOVE BECAUSE GOD FIRST LOVED US We are called to be like Jesus. We are called to love God, love our neighbour, love one another. There's a difference between love and romance. It's one thing to declare our love, send some roses, send a card and actions. When God loved the world He didn't just send a card and some messages that said "I love you". His love was action: Christ died for us.

LOVE IS NOT ROMANTIC SLUSH . The Bible word for love is called agape. Here's the definition. So this Valentine's Day, take care of your words. If you say "I love you" what do you mean? How far will you go for the person you say you love?

BLANK

For those here not married, maybe you think Valentine's Day doesn't apply to you. You're not expecting a Valentine's card or gift tomorrow. But let me suggest something. If you're single and not expecting a Valentine's card, then grab a Bible and wave it around. If you're too embarrassed

to, don't worry. So you're waving your Bible. You're holding your Valentine's card.

GOD'S VALENTINE CARD Whoever we are and whether we have a valentine or not, when we hold God's word, we hold God's valentine card and gift to us. We have the words saying "I love you" and we have the proof as we find out that Jesus has died for us.

AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED ME, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love. John 15:9
If you have never trusted Jesus, now is the time to accept the love God has demonstrated towards you and accept Jesus into your life.

If you do know Jesus, then Jesus says, remain in my love. Let love be a characteristic of your life by being prepared to love God, love one another, love your neighbour, love your enemies.

PRAYER

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