

On March 7, 1965, about 600 civil rights marchers headed out of Selma, Alabama headed for Montgomery. It was a peaceful protest of the voting restrictions in Alabama where Americans of African descent were 50% of the population but only 2% of the registered voters. The march was led by John Lewis, who would later be elected to Congress, Reverend Hosea Williams and Amelia Boynton who helped organize the effort.

The protest went according to plan until the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettes Bridge, where they encountered a wall of state troopers and county posse waiting for them on the other side. They were ordered to disband. Seconds later, troopers began shoving the demonstrators, knocking many to the ground and beating them with nightsticks. Tear gas was fired, and mounted troopers charged the crowd on horseback.

Marchers fled, many were injured, 17 were hospitalized. In the end, John Lewis had a fractured skull and Amelia Boynton lay unconscious on the bridge deck.

I ask, How does any person find the strength to do this?

What makes this possible? My answer? Love, but a special kind of Love.

This kind of love is more than a warm feeling or sentimental greeting card.

It comes from a source deeper than a passing moment or a noble cause; it grows out of deep convictions and not abstract concepts.

This is Jesus love, it comes from God and is poured out on us.

Jesus love draws its life from the Creator who breathed life into every human, each one made in the image of God. It forms deep connections to others, even strangers and enemies.

Jesus said, “No greater love has a man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” This is the kind of love which is at the heart of Jesus’ command to us to love one another. You might say “this is too much.’ When Jesus asks us to live this way, to be servants even to the point of death, we say to ourselves, This is more than any individual human being can do.

And you are right. It is. By our own ‘strength and will’ we cannot be obedient to this command. This is a hostile and hate filled world that crushes the weak, kills the unwanted, ignores the powerless, where it is every man, woman and child for herself.

And yet, just before he faced his own death, Jesus **commands** – commands! those who follow him to love one another, and to bear the fruit of love wherever they go.

Jesus gives us so many examples. From the moment Jesus was born, he was LOVE at work. It was love which brought life and wholeness to the people around Jesus. Love breaks out when Jesus forgives his enemies, and heals wounded and broken people. Love breaks out when outcasts and undesirables are invited to share the table and when evil is

destroyed. These are glimpses of the kingdom to come, the salvation Jesus prepares for all of us.

Now, it is our turn. **You** have been chosen, Jesus says, and appointed to continue this work in our time, in our world.

Stay connected to Jesus; draw your strength from Jesus; trust in the one who laid down his life for us, and wherever you go, you will bear the fruit of that love.

It could be A meatloaf dinner served at the Salvation Army

Clean socks and warm coats for neighbors who have no secure home

Protection for the vulnerable, young and old, who are in danger of violence.

And Compassion for those we don't know, don't understand, don't agree with, and possibly don't even like very much.

Now maybe you've been thinking that I have forgotten that today is a day for talk about the power of a mother's love to shape us and prepare us to go into the world, how mothers teach us how to care for ourselves and for others. But haven't I just? For isn't God just such a mother to us all? And most especially to those whose earthly mother was deeply flawed?

Isn't God the one who gave us life – and out of a deep and never ending love – holds our lives precious in her hand? All the simple lessons of our lives: don't hit your brother, share your toys, be kind to others, stand up straight, say thank you often.....all these simple learnings which have shaped us are versions of Jesus' teachings and arise out of the heart of God. At the center of God is a love grounded in forgiveness and compassion and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are sustained in that love.

You and I were born from the womb of God, birthed in love, **and because of that love lived out by others, some of whom we called Mom, we learned how to birth love in others and have tasted moments of salvation and grace.**

Today we give thanks. For everyone who has nurtured us, and taught us how to live out love for the sake of another. For all those who taught us how to serve, and the need to protect the weak and stand up for what is right. Today we give thanks, that the love which came to us in Jesus continues in our world through the work and lives of those who follow his way. We give thanks for those who living examples for the next generation.

Remember: Love one another for love gives birth to life.