

## *Love from the Heart*

✠ **Born again (vv.22f)**

✠ **Living in the Word (vv.22f)**

In the name of Jesus Christ, the Love of our Life, dear reborn children of God:

You don't have to be a doctor, a lawyer or a pastor. You don't even need to go to the Supreme Court to see how far we've fallen since their 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision made love for self legal at the cost of the unborn child. All you need is the most recent *People* magazine, January 23, 2012. I'm not talking about the heartwarming story of the President's marriage or the heart stopping murder at the Queen's estate. It's the ad for the series premier January 21: "When a spark of passion ignites an inferno of rage." The series entitled *Scorned*, tells "true stories of love turned lethal." Then in red letters below it says, "LOVE KILLS." That explains the woman walking away from a burning home with a gas can.

Hollywood doesn't get it. Neither do Americans reading magazines instead of God's *Good Book*. Our "Self-love Story" only shows how desperately we need God's love to convert us before the fires of the Last Day. Today God wants to warm us with His love so that we too **Love from the Heart**.

✠ **Born again (vv.22f)**

My Vicar year in Campus Ministry a guest preacher pointed out that there's a whole lot of theology in Sci-Fi. He meant the science fiction of that old *Star Trek* series. Theology is the study of God, but wherever human minds deny the Creator, they always make up their own. False gods abound in the environmentalist movement. We're not talking about taking good care of God's green planet gifted to the crown of His creation. Pollution for profit dishonors the Creator. But modern environmentalism worships "Mother Earth" and calls on human power to make life "born again."

Last week I was tired enough to finally watch the blockbuster movie *Avatar*. Not a bad story if you like Sci-Fi. But did you catch the "born again" theology behind the movie? On a planet far, far away, corporate greed sends the military to destroy the good forest people who worship their "mother" the planet. Those bad people from earth already "killed their mother." So now it's up to the hero to save them. He's a quadriplegic who finds new life in his *Avatar*, a new body fit for life in an amazing forest of beautiful special effects and pure love. The last scene opens his eyes, forever "born again" in his *Avatar*.

Sound familiar? Movie maker James Cameron promised in a TV interview not to increase environmentalism in *Avatar 2*; "too on the nose." Check out the religion connection; look up "avatar." Hinduism has 'em. *Avatars* they call gods come down to earth. Remember Luther's quote? "Satan is God's ape." God's Son came down to earth. Epiphany celebrates His appearing. "Incarnation" is another translation of "avatar." God is right: "**There is nothing new under the sun.**" (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

In Ecclesiastes the Holy Spirit says, "**[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.**" (3:11 NIV84) By denying the Creator, man tries to discover his own escape from death to eternal life. Meanwhile, armies keep killing and according to this new series, *Scorned* women in big boots will be walking away from lovers lost in their own house fires.

Sadly, all the world's religions and political parties insist they have answers without God. Does it really matter if men rule, or women rule, or kids rule – if all demand power apart from God? God does not discriminate. Love for self violates God's holiness. Peter quotes God's command a few verses before our text: *“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”* (1:14–16) Leading into our text, Peter continues: *“Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”* (1:17–21 NIV84) God's love in Christ overpowered our love of self.

It comes down to *“obeying the truth.”* We believe God sent His Son to save us all from sin and death; that He still sends His dear Holy Spirit to give new life to our sin-dead souls. God's joy and peace are ours to share: *“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”* It's whole new way of living. We care for the planet, honor the Creator, protect life from womb to the tomb. Broken hearts are mended. Children grow up where husbands and wives learn to love God's way over heartache and misery. We may not be green like forest people, but we do love each other deeply from the heart.

### ✦ **Living in the Word** (vv.22f)

God reveals a deadly connection between us and this planet. In the beginning God cursed Adam's rebellion: *“Dust you are and to dust you will return.”* (Genesis 3:19) Year after year when long summer days give way to cold winter nights, God shows His movie again: *“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.”* *And this is the word that was preached to you.* Don't worry. The Holy Spirit inspired the generic form. Cemeteries show all people *“are like grass,...like the flowers...”* that wither and die.

Deliverance can't come from “Me, Myself and I.” *Scorned* love can't kill enough. Congress can't rule enough. *Avatars* can't protest enough. But Jesus says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me...[and] because I live, you also will live.”* (John 14:6,19 NIV84) **Living in the Word** relieves life's deepest disappointments and deadly secrets. Every man or woman hurt by abortion will find God gracious here. The cross is proof that cannot be argued away. The empty tomb guarantees eternal life in your body resurrected and glorified like Jesus after He conquered death on Easter. Here comes the Holy Spirit again and again through Word and Sacrament as *“a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.”* (Ephesians 1:14 NIV84) Worse sin brings greater grace. God forgives you. He wants you back.

One of the saddest stories about abortion in the WELS has a happy ending. A young woman was convinced by her boyfriend and her father that she had to end her pregnancy. On the way to the clinic her mother begged God for a car accident. After the abortion when the girl came home, her dad put down his paper just long enough to say, “You're grounded. Go to your room.” Then he went back to reading. Years passed...a new family...a sad secret...and guilt tearing her heart. She thought her pastor meant everyone else's sins were forgiven. Finally she scheduled an appointment. She confessed her sin. Then she heard her pastor: *“Be of good cheer. Your sin is forgiven.”*

God's love was unconditional for her too. Yes, that sin, every sin is washed in the blood of the Lamb. He volunteered to save us; He alone could. Now we are free to grow like God to **Love from the Heart**, without condition, without limit. Not just for here, forever – your sin is forgiven. Your guilt is gone. Heaven waits. Keep on **Living in the Word** – in pure, **Born-again** joy. Amen.

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email [m.cordes@comast.net](mailto:m.cordes@comast.net) .  
You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at [www.wels.us/newlife](http://www.wels.us/newlife) .

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church  
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126