

A Happy **Valentine's Day** to you all!

But do you know who started all this?

He was a bishop who lived in Rome during the 3rd century, while the young Christian Church was being actively persecuted. Not much is really known for certain about his life, other than he was a bishop in Rome and that he was martyred. Again, the stories around his martyrdom are varied. So I picked one of my favorites.

Valentinus was known for his heart and passion. He would hold assemblies to tell people about the tremendous love of God. Secretly, he was known to marry couples so that they would be exempt from military conscription. Both activities were "illegal" under the reign of Claudius. So Valentinus was arrested.

While in jail awaiting execution, he got to know his jailer. After finding that the jailer's daughter was deathly ill, Valentinus prayed for her healing and she was miraculously healed. Later that week, he was taken to a location outside the city and executed: beaten by clubs and later beheaded. Later, a note was found in his cell by the jailer which simply read: "Your Valentine". The date was February 14, 269.

I use this story to highlight something basic to loving deeply: *True love always sacrifices for the good of the other.* Valentinus showed this love toward his executioner. He poured out his heart in prayer for an "enemy". I believe that, almost 1800 years later, this good bishop sets down a challenge for all of us to consider.

As the fabric of our Country is being ripped apart by hate, injustice, and disinformation, I believe we are being called to take a higher path. I affirm, with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that **"unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."** (from Martin Luther King's Acceptance Speech, on the occasion of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, December 10, 1964). King's non-violent resistance to evil (like Jesus' or Gandhi's or Valentinus'), was a loving, powerful force that would move the heart of history. We have an opportunity to do the same.

Yet, it will cost you and me dearly. The Apostle Paul encourages us to "speak the truth in love". Love means that we disarm our hatred and dehumanization of our "enemies", exercising instead mercy and compassion. Truth means humbly reflecting a reality that



may make people uncomfortable (including us). To authentically live out *both at the same time* means a radical readjustment of how we personally interact with the world: fighting moves to forgiveness, hate moves to hospitality, locking horns moves to listening deeply. Jesus called this lifestyle “the Kingdom of God”.

Valentinus calls us all to a new adventure. He beckons us to examine our own attitudes and behavior, then learn to make some tough choices. Real love demands no less. And, as we begin to live into a more profound sense of “Valentines Day”, our changed hearts will ripple out to touch a world so terribly thirsty for a refreshing sip of pure hope.

A Happy Valentine’s Day to you all!

Scott ☐

*P.S. Please join us for Lighthouse Church’s re-opening on **Feb. 7th** to in-person worship Sunday mornings @ 10:30 (bring your masks). Join us for encouragement, practical tools for healthy living, and a chance to connect with real friends.*