Let us Pray: … Heavenly Father, guide our hearts and our minds on how to love the unlovable. Teach us Father; teach us to love as you do… Now may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight O’ Lord, our strength and redeemer. Amen.

Do you judge others by a standard, yet have a hard time following that standard yourself? I know, I do this unawares, at times myself… you know, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Maybe you have been in a difficult spot such as a divorce, a separation from a loved one or you may have been hurt deeply by someone close to you. Have you been wronged in some way, been given the bird, cut off in traffic, or humiliated in public by something said in ears distance that bruised your ego? Has someone else taken the credit for something you have done or has someone outright lied to you? We all have something against someone else… The question to ask ourselves is what do we do with it and how do we respond to it…

We all respond in our own unique way to each of these situations. We may shut down completely and retreat within ourselves hoping the hurt will just go away. We may lash out in anger with our words or actions … attempting to reclaim that respect we think we deserve. We may even respond with the utter disbelief that someone could treat us like that because we are a bit naïve and think all people are innately good… … But down deep within ourselves we feel hurt, betrayed… disrespected … … … even rejected. We are at last human.

Jesus taught that we are not ‘of the world’ when we are born of God… we only live in the world. Yet life in the world can be cruel and unjust. Jesus challenges us to love even in these difficult situations. Though we know it is the right thing to do, like the apostle Paul writes, it is often the opposite that we do (Romans 7:14-25). In spite of this
struggle Paul reminds us that the best way to live life and deal with the unlovable in our lives is to seek to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

So how do we get this done? We can’t really love WELL until we have been loved first ourselves, and so … first and foremost… we have to accept God’s love for us. To do this we need to forgive ourselves as our Father has forgiven us through his ultimate sacrifice. Once we accept that sacrificial love he offers us unconditionally … … we are given the opportunity to love … to love WELL. But to love WELL becomes a choice… He gives us the opportunity to love WELL through his son Jesus because he is LOVE and he dwells in us. But, it is a choice. The gift is free, but like any gift … if it is not used it has not been accepted. An illustration I like to use is one of a Christmas gift. I received this cell phone as a gift for Christmas last year… it was all wrapped up in a pretty little package, but I had to reach out and take ahold of that gift. Once in my hands it still was of no good to me if I did not open it, put the battery in it and activate the service for it. Do you see… Just as God’s love for us is a free gift … we may have reached out and taken ahold of his gift… but like the cell phone, if we don’t activate that gift of love through forgiveness for ourselves and then for others…. It is of no use to us… … … This is the first step to loving WELL.

This is the promise of scripture. As John writes in his first letter, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God, Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love … does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love on another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made perfect (complete) in us.

God has always, and will always speak to his people in the form of ‘Revelation and Response’. He gives us the revelation and we are then called to respond to that revelation. As we noted earlier God is love. This love, this selfless love epitomized in
God’s gift of his son Jesus, is the very Spirit of God. God has revealed his love in human form in the life of Jesus. In the book of John chapter 8, verses 1 - 11, Jesus was brought a woman caught in adultery. The custom then … was to stone such a one to death. But Jesus told the gathered group that whoever was without sin should cast the first stone… … Of course, no one but Jesus Christ, Who is sinless, could have cast the first stone… and instead of casting a stone - he told this woman that he did not condemn her… Then, He told her to go her way and sin no more.

These passages are sometimes used by some to suggest that we are going to be loved just the way we are… without any expectation that there are things from which we need to turn away from. But this is not true. Jesus did exactly as the saying says. He hated the sin and loved the sinner in every case. He did not ever say, "Oh, don't worry about it. Everyone sins, so they shouldn't be picking on you. Oh, poor you"… … instead, He showed us how to have compassion on … and love for … the sinner. He did not condone the sin … however, he told this woman not to sin anymore.

To forgive is to Love… and to choose to Love is responding to God’s Grace… by choosing to love the unlovable as Jesus did… we have to begin with asking for forgiveness for ourselves first… every moment of every day if necessary – then, and only then can we act on that forgiveness by forgiving ourselves, and in turn, others as well… because we too are among the unlovable at times… …

This process of forgiving ourselves as God forgives us is part of the molding process that our Father does in us … He is the potter and we are the clay. The more he molds and shapes, the more we become capable to love WELL… And this is how we can understand, see and experience the Love Jesus taught and embodied for us. We can see and experience God - who is Love… … pure unconditional Love overflowing from within each and every one of us.

I know a 50 year old man who is serving a 12.5 year prison sentence for dealing drugs and transporting those drugs around the country throughout his life. Because of the
trade he was in he became an addict and spent the majority of his youth either high or drunk... During those years when he was lost ... he states “I never knew love, Hate and darkness were my best friends...” He was surrounded by self-absorption, anger, depression, insecurity in himself and fear... These are the things which kept him from allowing God to love him.

What enabled him to eventually accept God’s love was the forgiveness his children manifested to him... His children chose, in spite of their father’s errant ways, to love him as God loved him. His children became for him the presence of God ... enabling God’s love to flood his life.

Imagine what might have happened to this man had his family not made a choice to love? Imagine what might have happened if they had chosen to return evil for evil rather than with the help of God’s love ... be empowered to overcome evil with good?

God reveals himself in the form of selfless love and waits for us to respond. When you go out these doors ... you will have the opportunity to manifest the presence of God to some unlovable person in your life today or tomorrow. How will you choose to respond?