

Love Is Priceless: A Valentine's Day Message from Rabbi Gbaba



Let us pray unceasingly for one another so that the true meaning of Valentine's Day may spread across the globe.

Today is Valentine's Day. It is a day set aside across the globe to celebrate "love", and to show deep affection for those who adore us in return. But what about those whom we may perceive as enemies and/or those we think hate the grounds we walk on? What about those who demonize and persecute us for no obvious reasons other than the fact that they envy or hate us; or that they have not experienced love before and thus do not know how to establish a cordial and loving bond with the *others* around them? Should we pay back the evil they do unto us, or should we show them God's tender mercies so that our blessings may be doubled a thousand folds? As a Rabbi and a man of deep-rooted faith in Almighty God, I am inclined to opt for forgiveness, and to shower my perceived enemies with love so that the stroke of Agape Love from God may paralyze their hearts and minds! This is by no means an easy thing to do; because frankly speaking, it is easier said than done. Nevertheless, with deep faith in God, all things are possible!

To set my discourse in proper perspective, I want us to delve into how this celebration began. Per western sources, "The holiday's roots are in the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, a fertility celebration commemorated annually on February 15. It is believed that one Pope Gelasius I recast this pagan festival as a Christian feast day circa 496, declaring February 14 to be St. Valentine's Day." (www.infoplease.com/spot/valentinesdayhistory.html). But as a

research student of Afrocentric literacy and culture, I reject this claim or explanation that the entire world prior to this date, knew nothing about, or did not celebrate the essence of love. Quite bizarre in my opinion because the celebration of love began when God first created the world and made man in his own image.



Let us love one another as God loves us so that we may be worthy of saying “Happy Valentine’s Day” to the others around us!

Besides, the Holy Bible tells us that God is Love, and that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, and that whoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life! Consequently, the celebration of love begins from God and not man. In addition, if we were to trace the origin of man, it would not be in Rome or Greece, but our findings will situate the beginning of this celebration in Africa where the oldest hominid fossils were discovered. Hence, on the one hand, to say that the celebration of love was first observed by “pagans” or “heathens” is very absurd and inconsistent with the perceived definition of what the word “pagan” or “heathen” means from the Christian perspective, because early Christians argued that the tender mercies of a pagan or heathen are cruelty and hate, not love!

On the other hand, God created all of us to love one another—not to build walls and discriminate against the *others* around us because of differences of opinions or beliefs. Hence, the mere fact that Christians back in the day judged and branded as “pagans” or “heathens” those who did not share their religious beliefs was indeed contradictory to the mandate of a loving God who sees all humans as one divine creature he made. Therefore, for Christians to have even adopted a pagan festival as their own manifests the frailty and sinful nature of man to cast himself better than the others. For, if those whom you consider pagans or heathens are unlike you, then why adopt their way of life? Does that not also make you a pagan when you celebrate a

pagan festival? Yes, it does, and this is the reason most people around the world cannot find or experience genuine love because they are too busy putting down others to exult themselves!



The wisdom we receive from God is meant to be shared with the world to make our world a better place to live.

Love is patient; love is kind, love is forgiving, love is tender, and compassionate. Hence, to celebrate the feast of love that we today refer to as “Valentine’s Day”, we must reexamine ourselves to make sure we rid ourselves of our pagan or heathen ways of life—our pagan thoughts and denial of the existence of Almighty God, who is the manifestation of the love that we want to emulate and celebrate—to be patient with one another; to be kind to one another, and to be tender and compassionate toward one another, and stop building walls of hatred and confusion. We must stop thinking we are more superior than other human beings because of our skin color, or because we are more educated or more economically empowered than they are. These are all pagan or non-Christ-like thoughts that demean and make us unworthy of celebrating Valentine’s Day!

Therefore, dearly beloved, Valentine’s Day is far more than the exchange of gifts, or popping the question to the one you perceptually love. Rather, it is about seeing the presence of God in those you interact with, and being sincere and compassionate in the way you treat others as you would like to be treated. Valentine’s Day is not merely about having sex or getting mad because your wife, husband, boyfriend, or girlfriend would not sleep in bed with you. Instead, it is about showing great admiration and appreciation for those you come across in life and being thankful and respectful of their needs and concerns as you would like them to do yours. Do you

know how many times we hurt the feelings of others at our various work places, in our homes, in church and synagogue pews, or on mats in our mosques and shrines—how many times we misuse our political and economic powers to suppress others and make life miserable for them—yet go around telling people “Happy Valentine’s Day”! What is there to be “happy” about when my loved ones are deported or when they are murdered in cold blood while you bask in your arrogance and wealth as millions grieve the loss of their loved ones and live in abject poverty? Surely then, Valentine’s Day would be a dismal and pagan celebration and not a happy celebration of love!



Valentine is when two hearts are bind as one through the love of God and not material things, for the things of this world are temporal but the love of God is eternal!

Love is priceless: it cannot be bought with silver and gold. If that were the case, the richest men and women would have all the love they can afford to purchase. But fortunately, this is not the case. Love can only be attained when you have love in your heart and when you can share it with the *others* around you so that they too may experience the joy that you enjoy being in a relationship with the Creator of the universe. Love is not selfish and it does not flourish in people who are mean-spirited; but instead, love abounds in those who reach out to others to share with them the joyful experiences and blessings they receive from God, the source of infinite love. I have seen many couples who have all the riches in the world but they are not happy because their relationships are not based on the love from above but based on material gains that wither away with the seasons. Love is eternal and not temporal. It is also very warm and not frigid as ice or else you would never feel the warmth you feel when you warmly hug someone that you love. Therefore, to say “Happy Valentine’s Day” to our loved ones, we must make sure our hearts and minds are coordinated with the source from whom love derives, and that is Almighty God! Happy Valentine’s Day, and I love you!

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