Whether CNN, FOX, NPR, a “tweet” or a “blog,” catch the news these days and you’ll encounter some conjugation of the word, “radical” … applied to those radical-ized to terror in the name of Isis or some other permutation of so-called “radical” Islam:

San Bernardino, a cop shot in Philly, a Terror plot foiled, disaffected youth off to Syria for … radical-ization!
And politicians, then, hawking their solutions to the Muslim “problem.”

So “radical” -- a word with pretty negative “feel” -- perhaps better avoided in a sermon title. But it’s in my title today:

“Radical LOVE!”

(Which is) an attempt, first of all to address the grossly irresponsible mis-use of the word “radical” to defame a world faith … and thereby ensure that we never get past the kinds of stereotyping and ignorance-maintenance that allow us to “wall ourselves up” and not-deal with realities and truths that would call settled and comfortable assumptions and habits of ours into question … not have to deal with the sorts of truth that would require change and growth in our understanding of what Peace and Hope and Faithfulness ACTUALLY require of us!

Faithfulness, Peace and Hope requires of us RADICAL love! They require that we believe and practice in all matters the core conviction of our faith: that it’s PERFECT LOVE that defeats fear! PERFECT LOVE the death-overcoming power … PERFECT LOVE the only thing that will not fail … even as we look to Jesus to know what perfect love looks-like-in-action … AND: as Jesus asks such of … us too!

JESUS is our … HOPE because He not only exemplifies perfect love but because, in the Holy Spirit, He POWERS us to so love ourselves!

Love is what’s “radical” about Jesus: His demonstrates and proves-by-Resurrection that all abundance, hope and peace are the result and fruit of action-toward-love unconditional, self-less and outpouring! Aiming our lives at and pursuing such with all heart-mind-soul-and-strength IS life-itself, casts out fear, and delivers us into hope!
Self-less, unconditional, and outpouring love IS … “radical;” but not because it’s “extreme” as in something sensible people ought avoid. Self-less, unconditional, and outpouring is “radical” because it’s the ROOT of all that’s Christian!

Per the Webster Dictionary “radical” means “root.” “Root” as in… “rad-...ish,” for instance: that little red “root veggie” thin-sliced in salads.

Christianly love is that which roots us in God the Ground of our being. As it is with all roots, Love is how we draw nourishment from God for all we are in Christ. But even more than that: Love the radical -- the root -- conveys the “genetic code” of all God asks us to be!

As in dandelions! To rid your lawn of a dandelion, you can’t just rip up the foliage! You gotta dig out the root because … everything a dandelion is in that root – including its urge to flower and seed the future!

So it is with the Church: It’s all in the root, the … radical, the Love we know in Christ!

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THIS is what DEFINES us! Yes, we’re sinners! Yes, we’re broken; and we haven’t-yet escaped selfishness! We still royally mess things up! But such these don’t define us!

The Love of God and pursuing perfect love: these are what we truly are! We hold to this about ourselves and each other. This is who we are regardless our shortfall!

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And yet … There was Timothy McVeigh who thought himself “Christian” but in April 1995 brought down the Oklahoma City Federal Building, killing 168 … Likewise Robert Lewis Deer who just a few weeks ago murdered 2 at a Planned Parenthood.

Colonial American Christians delivered smallpox-infested blankets to native villages … Massachusetts Bay Christians persecuted Baptists and burned women as witches! In medieval times, so-called “Christian Crusaders” massacred Muslims, Jews, even Christians of differing ilk!

1700 years and more of Church-sponsored killing, corruption, and war with other Christians! But, we insist, none of these ought define who we are! Such things aren’t “radical” Christianity; they’re perversions of the faith, mis-use of Jesus’ Name and the scriptures! Don’t define US by such!

But so also, then, don’t say that “terrorists” are “radically” Muslim! Terrorists pervert Islam! They mis-use the Koran! Terrorism isn’t “radical;” it’s … perversion!

As with Christians, only those Muslims who practice the heart of their faith are “radical!” The ROOT of Islam is submission to God with all heart, mind, soul, and strength, a profound humility, and not just tolerance but welcome for those of other faiths!

Did you know that true Muslims reverence Jesus and his teachings?
Should Christianity be defined by those who *pervert* it rather than those faithful to its *root*, faithful to selfless, unconditional and outpouring love?

And so how will we define -- and allow friends, neighbors, politicians and newscasters to define -- Islam?

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you! *We* don't want to be defined by the measure of those who *pervert* our faith! Why then so-define 2 billion of our Muslim neighbors? Will we allow *fear* and *ignorance* to govern us, or will it be Christ-Lord-Of-Love?

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Last February, on an interfaith quest in Israel we were welcomed into the modest home of a Palestinian Muslim Cleric in the village of Nazareth! His commitment to Peace and to all peoples and faiths One Family of God has resulted in repeated persecutions for himself and his children, including his teenage son beaten nearly to death by other Palestinian youth.

Gentle and compassionate, his life at risk every day! He said to us, “ISIS is *not* Islam.” And referring to our welcome in his home, he said, “This *is* Islam.”

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But then … What do we *do* about the terror? What do we *do* about how uncertain life is becoming? What do we *do* about our … fear, about all in this world that there *is* to fear? With what do we *arm* ourselves against the enemies the evils? How can we hope to change the worsening economic, environmental, local and international state of things? In the face of the growing violence, the proliferation of the means of violence collapsing in on us, what do we *do*?

Jesus’ answer …

-- the answer he gave in times as dark as ours … Rome’s use of terror daily, everywhere, and cruel as cruel could be to keep populations in line!

*No* “human” rights! Disease rampant, injustice ubiquitous, politics terrifying, economics, for most, hopeless!

Jesus’ answer in that dark time? Love … *radically!* Love … *perfectly!* Love enemy and friend alike! Love outpouring especially on those not like you … and: with no thought to yourself! Lay aside all…risk all … to *aim your life* at loving so! Because it’s love like the love of Jesus that proves true!

Jesus yielding utterly! Jesus forgiving utterly. And utterly *WELCOMING*!

Love that way and hope *will overwhelm* you! Love that way and:

!! No room for fear!!

Love that way because *only* then Peace on Earth!
You won’t do it perfectly, but do it anyway! Let such love **define** your existence:

why you wake in the morning,
who you are at noonday and beyond!

Every going out, every coming in unto this! Like salt, flavor the earth with it! With such love leaven -- raise the level – of every interaction! Light the world with it, YOU-love’s-flame shining on in the dark! After 2000 years of fits and starts for the Church, isn’t it time that we actually **do it … radically …**

Do our times not **demand** it of us? Doesn’t Jesus hope we’ll do it?

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Hurray for last Wednesday’s snow! You might not agree with that sentiment; but that snow storm meant that, rather than commuting into Syracuse to teach school, my wife and I had a free day; a day for special time together, a little rest and putting some housework behind us!

So excited about it was I that, after the 6 AM “school closed announcement” I didn’t go back to bed! And, as the coffee brewed, I watched the end of a movie on the little T.V. that overhangs our kitchen counter. The movie included a quote from Albert Einstein:

> **“Only a life lived for others is worth living.”**

Smartest guy in the world! So famous and admired for his genius! But he believed that something that even the dumbest of us, the weakest, the poorest, the most crippled of us is fully capable of … the very and **only** thing, that makes life worth living:

> “A life lived for **others**!”

Selfless, unconditioned, outpouring love! Now **that’s radical**! Not because it’s “extreme!” but “radical” because it’s the **root** of all that matters and, as the Apostle Paul wrote, to wield such love is to **CONQUER**!

So how ‘bout giving it a try? How ‘bout some real time in prayer to tell your Lord that you believe it; and that, with His help, you’ll **do** it?

In Christ, how will you respond to **fear**? Will you respond radically? Toward perfect love?

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We gotta **do** this! No matter the cost, we **gotta** do this **Jesus** thing! We gotta show the world that we’re different, **RADICAL LOVE** the difference that makes all the difference! It’s **RADICAL LOVE** that will rescue us from the **insanities** in which the world is **so** invested!

**Radical LOVE!** No other way! **No other way!** Amen!