

For the fun of it

By [Diane Roth](#)

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Last Tuesday night, I held the second of a short series of Lectio Divina meetings at church. I pulled the chairs into a circle, put the small candle out and prepared for whoever might show up.

There were four of us in total, practicing silence and listening and imagination. We read yesterday's gospel reading.

I knew I was the preacher on Sunday, and one thing I didn't want to do is use the time to do sermon preparation. I wanted this to be listening for its own sake, not with an end in mind.

But it's harder than it looks. It's hard to put down the schedule that says I need this many insights for my preaching on Sunday. I caught myself arguing with myself, a little about a word or a phrase: *why are you listening to that?* one of the voices in my ear said. *That's not what you are going to preach about on Sunday.*

But I couldn't help it, I kept staring at the word 'love' in Jesus' question to Simon, about the creditor who forgave two of his debtors. "Which of them will love him more?" Jesus asked.

And I thought: "What's love got to do with it? I don't associate the word 'love' with relationships that have to do with money and owing." For the first time it struck me as an odd question. "Which of them will love him more?"

*You are not going to preach about that,* the voice in my head told me.

I thought it was interesting anyway. As we prayed and listened along, the images I saw were of oil, of an unwelcome guest crashing a party, a man with his arms crossed, his lips pursed. And what's love got to do with it? Even if our mortgage company tore up all of our bills, and declared us free and clear, I'm not sure what I would call what I would feel 'love.'

So the next morning I was doing some of my sermon preparation, re-reading the story, taking down notes, examining the scripture and myself. And, I'll admit it: I digressed. It wasn't the direction I was heading for my sermon, but I just had to look up some words in my Greek New Testament. First the word 'love.' What kind of love was it, anyway? I looked up the word love, and then, just for the fun of it, I looked up the word that meant the creditor 'forgave' or 'cancelled' the debts. Because, as it turned out, it's a different word than the one normally used for forgiveness. It has the word 'gift' in it.

Later on, I checked the end of the story, when Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven", and discovered that we were back to the more common word for forgiveness, which has to do with release, being set free. I didn't look it up because I needed to know for my sermon, but just for the fun of it.

For the fun of it.

It's a pragmatic world, and in that world, we think of Scripture often as a tool, a means to an end, whether the end is writing a sermon or 'help in living your life.'

But maybe we're not supposed to use the Holy Scripture so much as be in relationship: argue, ask questions, wonder, imagine, dig in.

For the fun of it.

I realize that many people don't experience reading the Bible as in any way 'fun.' Maybe it's all of those thin pages, big words, sort of disturbing stories, or proof texts. Maybe the burden of understanding it, or even trying to make use of it, makes it even harder. Maybe we need to invent better tools to get at the fun of it, or just to talk more about the fun of reading the scriptures 'just because.' For the joy of it.

For the joy of discovering more about the uninvited guests who crash parties, the widows who weep after funeral biers, children who share loaves and fish, Pharisees who stand around with pursed lips and meet with Jesus in the dark. For the fun of discovering more about the one who comes to parties at Pharisees' houses and lets fallen women blubber all over his feet, and says "Your sins are forgiven."

So no, none of this got into my sermon yesterday, at least not on purpose. Listening for its own sake: not with an end in mind. Like spending a lazy afternoon with my husband, or visiting my dad in the nursing home and singing songs with him,

memorizing his face.

For the love of it.

*Originally posted at [Faith in Community](#)*