Life in a Nutshell – Sonic and Sidewalk Love – by Jill Montz

Love is a funny thing. I personally have fallen in love…and out of it. I have held love close…and thrown it away. I have craved love…and denied it. I have felt love and been warmed by it…and I have felt love and been smothered by it. I have been blinded by love…and it has opened my eyes. Love has given me wings…and roots. Love has been given to me…and been used against me. Love has dang near killed me…and love has saved me.

February is synonymous with love but love waits for no man, retailer, or strapped for cash bank account. Starting practically the day after Christmas, store shelves are lined with chocolate hearts, little and life-sized stuffed bears asking everyone to "be mine" and all things cupid himself would keep in his arsenal to lure even the hardest of hearts over to the seasonal store aisle. Being in the retail business for most of my life, I start thinking about Valentine's Day while the Thanksgiving turkey is still thawing in the fridge. So by the time February rolls around my mind is not on love…it is on the lake and summer fun, 4th of July, and red, white, and booming ideas for our store.

Personally, I haven't celebrated Valentine's in well over a decade. My bathtub is not filled with rose petals but rather Epsom salt. I don't pop anything chocolate onto my taste buds, just lots of Tylenol and Advil. And I only snuggle up to a heating pad in bed.

But that doesn't mean my life is not full of love.
I am blessed to love many wonderful people and to be loved by them in return.

My greatest love God ever gave me comes in the form of my teenage daughter who has shown me what it means to love unconditionally. (I mean anyone with a teenager can shout *Amen* to that!) My immediate family loves me for who I was, who I am and who I will be. They have shown up on my happiest days, my saddest days, and all the days in between. God gave me some of the best when it comes to family.

My friends love me without obligation. These are the people who show up for me out of love and not because a birth certificate or a marriage license guilt them into it. They make me meals because they know I can't cook. They fix things around my house because my pink tool set can only do so much. They come get any and all dead animals out of my attic, backyard, and dog's mouth because they know my stomach can't do it. They show up with Sonic drinks, extra blankets at cold ball games, to pick up my kid when I can't, to all the celebrations and to all the events we don't dare post on social media.

My friends love me on good hair days and bad hair days and pulling my hair out days. They love me when I forget to text them back, forget to bring the team snacks, and forget what I was going to tell them. They love me when I have a lot to say, nothing to say, and when I can't say what I am thinking because the Good Lord will bring it up again one day. They love me well. And I love them, too.

My church family loves to be the hands and feet of Jesus. This group is only human and far from perfect, but they truly try to love like Jesus. They minister to my physical, emotional, and spiritual needs on a daily basis. They showed up to my house with an apple pie soon after we moved to Iowa Park and welcomed me and Dotty from the very beginning. My faith in God, His love, and His people have grown, thanks to this group. I am still trying to convince them they would have better luck with a pecan pie; but other than that, they are good people.

And of course the greatest love of all…Romans 5:8:

"But God demonstrated His own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Can I get an Amen, and a hallelujah?

I look around my life and it is busting at the seams with people who truly care about me and who genuinely love me. I might not have anyone showing up at my front door with a life-sized stuffed bear but I have more than my fair share of folks I call, "Mine."

Romantic love is great; and if you have it, then I hope you treasure it. But love comes in all kinds of forms and feeling loved is special in all the ways it is felt. So this February, if no one is sending you a dozen roses or taking you to a candlelight dinner, remember those who called you when you were sick, or swept your sidewalk when it snowed, or brought you a Sonic drink when you had a hard day. Then, maybe you can send them a text or drop them a note in the mail to say you love them, too. And if you wait until February 15th you can buy them (and yourself) some chocolates for half off retail price in the seasonal aisle. Go ahead and get yourself that bear, too. Bear hugs are the best…any day of the year.