

ALDERSGATE UMC OF BUTTE, MT
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January 30, 2022 - Pastor Matthias Krier

Scripture Lesson: I Corinthians 13:1-13 NRSV

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,* but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly,* but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Three things will last forever, faith, hope and love – and the greatest of these is love!

Today we will focus entirely on love. Unfortunately, we have only one word in the English language for this. As some of you may already know there are at least eight words in the Greek to describe different kinds of love. Here they are:

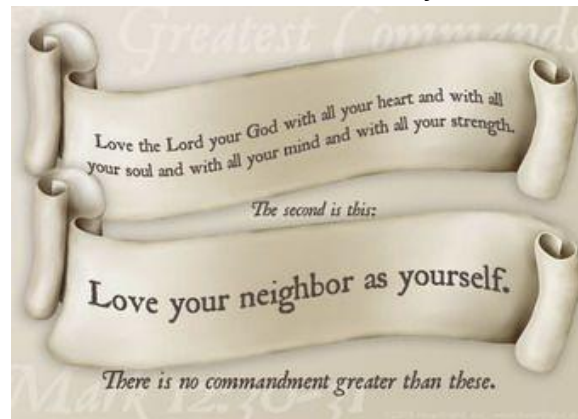


So depending on the relationship we are talking about, love has a different feel to it. But we have a description of what love is and what love is not that we have heard again and again at weddings and once in a while at Memorial Services. This time when you hear these words, make a mental note on which one the Spirit is nudging you to pay attention to on your journey in striving to be a follower of Yeshua:

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.

Some of us were taught growing up that real Love is putting others before ourselves, is it not? Unless you are in the habit of always putting others before yourself and then what will eventually happen is burn out. Burnout is a result of not loving yourself in such a way that not only creates burn out, but causes bitterness and resentment as well.

There is a balance to loving others and to loving yourself. Here is a timeless ancient formula that is thousands of years old from our Bible:



There is indeed a balance of loving God, loving neighbor and loving self. Growing up I do not remember much about loving "self". Maybe one of the many blessings of your life is that you were taught all three aspects of this verse, not just two. I remember this verse being lifted up in sermons and catechism lessons on loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself, but nothing stands out for loving self. I simply do not remember much of anything on how essential these three need to be in balance. There is no way to live in harmony with oneself unless there is balance in loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. I suspect that to talk about self-love back in the day might have been seen as selfish.

The Greek word for love of self is:



In my first appointment I nearly burned out of the ministry because I was working 60 - 70 hours a week. Fortunately my kids were so little, not sure they remember any of that but my wife sure does. Oh, I was loving God and I was loving my neighbor, but I was not loving family and loving myself. Fortunately through the Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation I learned some needed spiritual practices to be sure I was loving self. I learned that unless I truly cared for myself in mind, body and spirit, I could not truly care for others, much less love them.



When we have balance in loving God, loving neighbor and loving self, we will love naturally and freely. When we balance work and play, we can naturally be kind and be a blessing to others. However, if we do not have balance in work and play and loving ourselves, we will begin to have feelings of resentment. These feelings of resentment can turn into bitterness. Bitterness can actually turn into hate. This is not the Way of Love.

There are red flags that come up on whether or not you are truly caring for yourself: exhaustion, resentment, bitterness, short tempered, being rude, being irritable. Granted we all have our moments where we are expressing

our humanity, but we know deep down when something is missing in our lives, it may just be “philautia”, self love.

Now switching gears just a bit, but very much a part of this discussion. You have heard love is never having to say you’re sorry... For the life of me, I could not remember where that quote came from. Who came up with that? Do you remember?

So I was curious where that came from so I put that into my search engine and I watched a 2 minute movie clip came up from Love Story where the male played by Ryan O’Neill said, “I’m sorry”, and the female character played by Ali McGraw said: “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.”

Okay, I have yet to see the film to understand the context of why Ali’s character would say, “*Love means never having to say you’re sorry.*” And maybe, just maybe in the context of the film there is justification for this, but in my mind it is the exact opposite: “*Love always means having to say you’re sorry.*”

In all of our relationships with family and friends, we need to be humble enough to admit when we are wrong or admit when we have hurt someone and say those words, “*I am sorry,*” and mean it. Folks can always tell when you are getting a disingenuous apology.

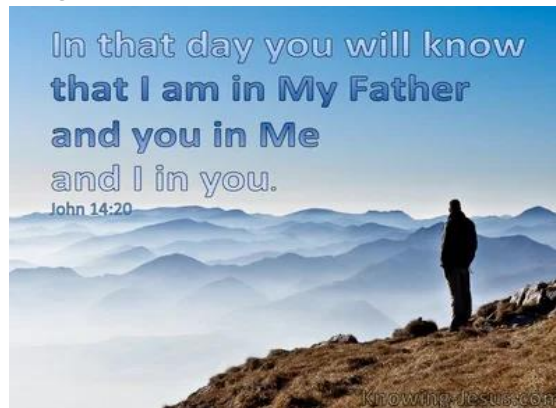
Shifting gears again during a time of great struggle in so many ways around our planet which seems to have its roots in fear:



There is no fear in love which leads to the whole concept of “*us vs. them.*” During a global pandemic there is no such thing as “*us vs. them.*” No

matter what side of the fence you are on, it is only us on this planet earth of ours.

The sooner we come to this realization that Yeshua tried so desperately to teach his followers being One with God:



By the grace of God, the fear that drives us apart needs to be driven out by love. How exactly? By the grace of God we can love as Jesus loved. I admit it, I cannot love as Jesus loved unless I feel this Oneness with God and with one another. In other words, we need to wake up that we are already One with God, One with Jesus and One with the Spirit. The disciples did not believe it at first either, but Jesus brought together men and women from all walks of life, even a hated tax collector as one of his disciples and these timid disciples became martyrs of the faith.

This came even more alive to me in the series called "*The Chosen*" and how Jesus brought together these men and women to become his beloved disciples.

The refrain from the hymn of preparation we are about to sing says:
*One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord.*

May this be so. Amen.