

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 29 Jan 2023

Sermon Title : Why Love?

Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng

Text : 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

INTRODUCTION

This is the start of a new 'Love Is' sermon series. The focus for the next few Sundays will be on that portion of Scripture very commonly known as the "Love" Chapter: 1 Corinthians 13. However, before we continue, let us ponder on a related question – "From which of the 12 sons of Jacob did Jesus come: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph or Benjamin?" Why is Jesus who is so important not from the firstborn Reuben, or Levi the tribe of priests since Jesus is the Great High Priest? Why was He not from Joseph who saved the entire family of Jacob, or Benjamin the most cherished youngest son of Jacob? Why Judah?

The theme of 'Love'

Love is not something that pops up in the New Testament. God is consistent and this theme about loving people is found throughout Scripture even from the Old Testament. In Leviticus 19:18 God had already ensured that the truth or teachings of love is there for all those who would follow Him - "*You shall not take vengeance, nor hold any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the Lord.*"

1 Corinthians 13

When Paul the Apostle who knew the scriptures very well preached, taught and wrote letters to the churches around him about love, this theme of love in the Old Testament was the backbone of his teachings. This is because he not only wrote about love in 1 Corinthians 13 but also in other letters, including Romans 13:8: "*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for the one who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law.*"

- Paul, led by the Holy Spirit is saying in the New Testament that we owe love to one another and if we were to love one another, we are fulfilling the Law given in the Old Testament. This is seen 2 verses later in Romans 13:10: "*Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the Law.*"
- The moment we live out loving one another and doing no wrong to a neighbour, we have fulfilled the law. That is how Paul saw the importance of love.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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In 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14, Paul talks about spiritual gifts and the utilization of all these spiritual gifts. Yet, he was being very intentional in inserting this whole teaching of love in between the 12th and 14th chapters. In 1 Corinthians 12:31, after talking about spiritual gifts, Paul uses these words “let me show you a more excellent/better way” and proceeded to talk about love in 1 Corinthians 13, before moving on again to spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 14.

- Scholars think that Paul’s message here is this - It is not about how spiritual we are, the amount of spiritual gifts we have, or how we exercise them and how often we utilize them. By extension, it is also not about how powerful or holy we are because these things pale in comparison to love because love is a more excellent/better way.

Love is not something simple and basic that we just tick that we have heard about and move on to deeper things of God. Paul is telling us that love is priority. 1 Corinthians 13 should be a portion of Scripture where we immerse ourselves in daily until we embody it and can live out the love that we are called to live out.

1. 1 Corinthians 13:1 - “If I speak with the tongues of mankind and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a **noisy gong** or a **clanging cymbal**.”

Paul is not degrading nor devaluing tongues or languages. Rather, it is hoped that the readers and listeners of this will realize the importance and the priority of love. If we view tongues as important, then we should view love as being of higher importance.

So, if you speak with the tongues of mankind i.e. known language including sign language, and angelic tongues i.e. unknown languages given by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit - but you do not have love, you are nothing but a noisy instrument that is of no good to anyone. There is no substance. It is meaningless, annoying and irritating.

2. 1 Corinthians 13:2 - “If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am **nothing**.”

Paul is saying that spiritual gifts are good but what is of even greater value and greater importance, is love. An ancient Christian writer suggests that Paul’s intention in using those two words together - prophecy and faith - was to encompass all strengths, all talents and all gifts from God because every strength, every gift and every talent is utilized or exercised either by word (prophecy) or by deed in faith.

So, even if you have all the gift, strength, talent in administration, prophesy, healing, interpretation, have all knowledge and great faith that can move mountains, without love, you are nothing.

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3. 1 Corinthians 13:3 - “And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me **no good.**”

Paul is not saying that we should not be giving our possessions away, nor that we should not be willing to sacrifice ourselves for people. He is saying that even in the light of these very noble things that people do - if love is missing, it is no good.

So, even if you give away all your possessions and sacrifice yourself by giving your own life and body that you may glory (boast), but love is missing, it does you no good.

Judah's Love (Genesis 37-50)

One very good reason why Judah was chosen to be the line from which Jesus came could be because of Judah's sacrificial love. Willing to take the place of his youngest brother Benjamin as Joseph's slave after Benjamin was caught with the silver cup and money in his sack of food. (Gen 44:33) His love echoes Christ's love for humanity:

Judah	Jesus
Judah loves his father and has promised to look after Benjamin	Jesus loves His Father and has promised to carry out His mission on earth
Judah loves his brother, Benjamin	Jesus loves humanity
Judah offered himself as substitute for his brother, to suffer slavery on behalf of his brother	Jesus offered himself as substitute for humanity, to suffer pain of sin and death on behalf of humanity
Judah did that act out of love.	Jesus did that act out of love

1 Corinthians 13:13 – “But now faith, hope, and love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

CONCLUSION

Christianity is a love relationship between God and us, and between His followers. May we allow God to transform us so we may grow to become disciples of Christ who love people genuinely because love is priority, even above spiritual gifts, prophesy, hope and faith.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 aloud slowly.
 - a. Which of the 3 verses speaks to you the most?
 - b. Reflect on your current life as a child of God. How have you exercised or utilized your speech (tongues), gifts, possessions and service in your daily living?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Appoint someone to read 1 Corinthians 13:13. Why do you think 'love' is top priority in our Christian faith?
 - a. (i) How has Judah's sacrificial love and the honour God has given him to be the ancestor of Jesus, spoken to you?
 - (ii) What is one thing you can learn from 3a(i) above?

4. Which of these 3 do you think you are strongest in:
 - (i) tongues,
 - (ii) prophesy and/or faith
 - (iii) giving and/or sacrifice
 - a. How has knowing that all these amount to you being nothing and of no good or use, if you have no love, impacted you?
 - b. What is one way you can better embody love in your above strength?
 - c. How can your group members help or encourage you to achieve 4b above, in the following week(s), until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your personal testimony on how you have been transformed by God to use your gift of 'tongue' or 'gift/talent' in love.

OR

Give thanks to Jesus for His sacrificial love, suffering the pain of sin and death for your redemption.

6. As a group, seek the Holy Spirit in the leading of your daily lives as you live out God's purposes for you by making love your priority in life. Ask God to help our church be sensitive to each other's needs and the needs of our 'neighbours', to prioritize love over possessing or utilizing tongues, gifts or talents or resources and services. Pray also for the Holy Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Christ who is love.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Goodness of God – Bethel [\(19\) Goodness Of God \(Lyrics\) ~ Bethel Music - YouTube](#)
2. Deeper in Love – Don Moen [\(19\) Deeper In Love - Don Moen - YouTube](#)
3. Made to Worship – Chris Tomlin [\(19\) Made To Worship - Chris Tomlin \(With Lyrics\)™HD - YouTube](#)

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