

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 26 Mar 2023

Sermon Title : Love does not Rejoice but Rejoices

Speaker : Rev Shannon Chan

Text : 1 Corinthians 13:6

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Corinthians 13:6, Paul tells us that:

1. Love does not rejoice in *adikia* (Greek)

The word “*adikia*” translates to the following meanings:

- *wrongdoing (NRSV, ESV) including impatience, unkindness, rude, insisting on one’s own way, being easily angered or resentful*
- *unrighteousness (NASB, HCSB, ERV)*
- *injustice (NLT, AB, NET)*
- *evil (NIV, CEV, GNT)*

True love is not delighted when any of the words above surface in one’s own life or the conduct of others. When people are unrighteous, not in the right standing before God, their behaviour becomes loveless and destructive and impacts the lives of those around them. They become out of alignment with God’s will for their lives.

Loving others - wanting the best for them

Loving others is more than simply caring about others. It is also about wanting the best for them and is not satisfied until the best outcome happens in their lives. That is the degree of personal involvement of others that love entails. If we truly love others, we will not be happy if they experience injustice. This means that we don’t just accept when unfairness happens to them and close both eyes and not get involved because it takes so much effort and trouble. But we are also joyful when things are made right in their lives.

Love is not just about who we care for but what we care for them to have. God calls us to want for the lives of others to be made right and whole. We take joy in justice for others and we work towards helping them to secure justice. If we love people, it will burden us if something unjust happens to them. We would love others enough to not just stand by and do nothing, instead we will want to make things right for them.

When it comes to evil, love does not delight in evil, but we need to remember that it is God and not us who decide what is right or wrong. Even if everyone in the world says that something is right which God says is wrong, it is still wrong, no matter what human beings think. God tells us specifically what is good and what is evil. Celebrating

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something that is evil might seem like a loving thing to do but if we continue to let an individual walk the path of evil, it will lead to destruction and have an impact on others. Hence God's love does not delight in evil because ultimately it brings destruction to people.

- However, it is of vital importance to consider our '*posture*' even though we need to hold our '*position*'.

The perverseness of "epicaricacy"

While we are reminded by apostle Paul that love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, we also recognize that humans are not perfect and we will be encumbered or stumbled over wrongdoing, unrighteousness, injustice, evil. The word "epicaricacy" refers to people who rejoice at or derive pleasure from the misfortunes of others. Does this exist in the church as well? Do we ever rejoice in the misfortunes (be it deserved or underserved) of a fellow brother or sister in Christ or take pleasure in seeing another's painful plight? Church should be a safe place where we do not feel we have enemies to contend with. The equivalent word for epicaricacy, is the German word '*schadenfreude*'. Pastor Wayne Greeson shares about the implications of '*schadenfreude*':

"Envy is not the same as 'schadenfreude', but it is often the motivation for it. Psychologists say 'schadenfreude' is a lessening of painful feelings of envy when someone perceived as enviable gets knocked down a peg. But the "joy" of 'schadenfreude' comes at an awful price."

- '*Schadenfreude*' is a dark emotion in the human heart. Sadly, the dark emotion of '*schadenfreude*' is prominently on display on social media. Crowing and gloating over the troubles of political opponents and real or perceived adversaries is heard frequently from celebrities, politicians and many others. Not even the death of an opponent stops many from ugly words of '*schadenfreude*' celebration.
- Scriptures warn against engaging in the joy of '*schadenfreude*'. The essence of '*schadenfreude*' is enjoying when someone else fails, but Solomon tells us: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him" (Proverbs 24:17–18)."

2. Love Rejoices in the Truth

Love rejoices in the truth is "*alethia*" (Greek). There are two facets to the word truth, truth that is objective and truth that is subjective:

- Truth objectively seen – living truly, living in truth, according to truth
- Truth subjectively seen – truth as a personal excellence

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Jesus embodies both these facets of truth. But from John 8:2-11, we can see how Jesus addresses this facet love rejoices in the truth. Consider the woman caught in adultery. The Pharisees knew the Jewish Law (Deuteronomy 22:22-24) that governed adultery and wanted justice to be done. It would be an absolute travesty to let this woman go. If we applied 1 Corinthians 13:6, the Pharisees wanted Jesus to “rejoice in the truth” of the woman’s guilt. After all, love rejoices in the truth. The Pharisees asked for Jesus’ opinion, with an intention to trap Him. Even though the position that Jesus took would reflect the Law, but what would Jesus’s posture be?

John 8:6-8

⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

- What did Jesus write on the ground and what were the Lord’s words? Using our “sanctified imagination”, Jesus might have written on the ground, “My life for yours”. His words not just for the woman but for the Pharisees. His poignant words were not only for the present, but future prophetic.

John 8:10-11

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

- Jesus’s love rejoiced in the truth that He would be sacrificing His life for the sins of the world, there would be no condemnation for the woman’s sins and that she would be freed from her sins. We can only imagine her joy as He set her free from her enemies and their evil schadenfreude hearts. As she was forgiven much, we believe she would have chosen to walk away from her life of sin.

CONCLUSION

He the Lord (who is the Word), but also The Lord’s words – these words timely when they were first written-spoken to that woman, are timeless as ancient words passed to us in our generation. May our love not rejoice in wrongdoing, unrighteousness, injustice, evil, and even as Jesus also modelled how love rejoices in truth – that His ancient words are for us today – that they are always true to change me and to change you.

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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?

- 2a. Appoint someone to read 1 Corinthians 13:6 aloud slowly.
- 2b. How does this verse speak to you personally?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. The word “epicaricacy” refers to people who derive pleasure from the misfortunes of others. Does this exist in the church as well?
- (i) Have you ever been in a situation where you experienced “epicaricacy”?
 - (ii) What impact did it have on you?
- 3b. What are some challenges you will face in overcoming “epicaricacy”?
- 3c. How can Jesus’ position and posture in John 8:2-11 help you overcome challenges listed in 3b above?
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- 4a. (i) Is your love for others one that wants for the lives of others to be made right and whole?
- (ii) Is there someone at home, your workplace/school or in church whom you need to help make things right for?
- 4b. What is something you can do to help the life of the person mentioned in 4a(ii) above be made right and whole?
- 4c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4b above, in the following week(s), till 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 experience on how God helped you to not rejoice in wrongdoings but instead, rejoice in the truth. How has that motivated you to love others genuinely?

OR

Give thanks to Jesus for giving His life for yours that your life can be made right and whole.

6. With a prayer partner, pray for the action steps/changes you have committed to in questions 3c and 4b and 4c above, surrendering your fears and challenges to God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you as an individual and a group to commit to keeping each other accountable in this spiritual journey to practise “Love that does not rejoice in wrongdoings but rejoices in the truth”, with the correct position and posture.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Power of Your Love – Hillsong https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9_0jiO5ZRM
2. Sovereign Over Us – Michael W. Smith <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lay-r2g52SQ>
3. Build My Life – Housefires <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85jPPvzRXzc>

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