

1 Corinthians 13

Date: Sunday, 13 December 2020

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

Sermon: When Love Came Down II

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Passage

1Cor. 13:1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

1Cor. 13:4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1Cor. 13:8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

1Cor. 13:13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Transcript

Is This Who We Are?

We're getting closer to Christmas. And today, we're looking again at this passage that Paul writes. 1 Corinthians 13. And I wanted to ask, "Is this passage who we are?" I don't mean to condemn, I speak to challenge. Because 1 Corinthians 13 is what Paul calls believers to. The church is meant to show love. And for each one of us, if you trust in Jesus Christ, this is his call to us, that we are to show love. So today, we're going to go through the first four pairings found in verses 4-5 to be challenged by what it says to us. Next week we'll look at the remaining pairings. And we're going to reflect on how Christ in this passage. And how it relates to Christmas.

So let's have a look.

Love is Patient and Kind

Love is patient and love is kind. The word that Paul uses here for patient can also mean long suffering. Paul calls us to be patient with those around us. I'm reminded of when Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother, 7 times? And Jesus tells him that it should be seventy-seven times (Matthew 18). To be patient even when others fail us, hurt us, sin against us. This is the type of patience.

Is this who we are? Patient. I hope that you are honest with yourself, because if you really are, this is hard. Being patient. People can test us, over and over and over again. And they may come to us, repenting, and yet they may not change. Recently, Rachel and I were at Miranda Westfields at the Starbucks. It was close to closing time but we managed to get in as the last customers. One of the staff, they closed up the metal fence and they said to us, "Lucky last! We're trapping you in" she said jokingly. Except that there was this couple who thought that they could get through, and they managed to sneak in. They caught the staff's eye, and she just rolled her eyes. Not impressed that they would cheat the system like that. I too couldn't believe it. "How could they do that? How could they disrespect the staff here at Star bucks." Rachel didn't really mind at all, she displayed patience. She re-

minded me that I can be like that couple, cheating the system when it suits me. Pushing boundaries. Breaking the rules when I think it's convenient.

Paul tells us to be patient. I know some of us, have chosen to cut people out of their lives because you've have had enough. That is not what God calls us to do! Especially when you remember that God has been patient with you. He has been long suffering, even when you have sinned against him. He chooses to remain patient.

Maybe you think you're patient. But are you kind? Patience and kindness are two sides of the same coin. Patience is the passive response to others. But kindness is the active response to others. We know what kindness looks like, perhaps we've had kindness done to us and it's stuck with us for a long time. Is this who we are? Kind? Maybe you'll say yes. But are you kind to those who hurt you? Are you kind to your enemies? Again, I want us to hear Paul's words, God's words, and to take them seriously. Let these words sink in. I admit that I struggle with this. When someone cuts me off in traffic, I want to yell at them. I want to speed up around them to tell them off. But that's not being kind. Maybe it's not trivial like driving, someone has seriously hurt you to the core. You are hurting because of what they've done. But love is kind. And haven't we received kindness from Jesus? Christ shows the ultimate kindness towards us. Mercy when we really should have received judgment because of our sin. If Jesus didn't come to save you from your sins, then why do we celebrate Christmas? If we forget that we were once were sinners, then I'm afraid then we've lost the true meaning of Christmas. Some of you are withholding kindness, and that's wrong. If you're withholding kindness from someone, it's because you've forgotten that Jesus is being kind to you.

Love is patient. Love is kind.

Love does not envy nor boast

Love does not envy nor boast.

One of the hardest things I reckon that we may struggle with in our country is contentment. Because everywhere you look, there's advertising. And more often than not, what are they advertising? Something that you don't need, but they tell you that you want. Buy this car, you'll be amazing. You need this to be attractive. But we're told that love does not envy. We're told that when we love one another in

church, we don't seek to one up each other. Instead of comparing ourselves to other people, we seek to build others up.

Let me lay this challenge down. Are we buying things because we need them, or because we want them because someone else has something better? We are so comfortable in Australia, and yet we spend so much. We buy things that we don't really need. Stuff that's made that's going to end up on the rubbish heap. And it reveals our hearts. Are we jealous of the people around us? Are we envious of other people in the church? So much so that we seek to tear them down. We say, "Oh such and such is nice, but did you hear the latest gossip about them?!" Love does not envy.

But love also does not boast. If we are envious of others, we may want to boast about how great we are. To heap praise on myself. Do we talk about ourselves saying how great we are? We don't do that of course. But we do it with false humility. You know the kind. I once did a 21 hour work day in the office. I got into the office at 9am. And left the office at 6am. It was crazy. And you know what I did? At 3am, I sent an email to the partner, just telling him something like, "Oh, thanks for the advice you gave me." But in actual fact, I just wanted him to see what time I sent the email. I wanted him to realise that I sent it at 3am, that I was working hard. That's boasting! I was trying to heap praise on myself.

Love is not envious and love does not boast. Just like Christ himself. Christ chose not to be envious, instead he chose to empty himself taking on human flesh. That's what we celebrate at Christmas time. Jesus choosing to humble himself. Becoming a human being for you and me. There was no room for Mary and Joseph so Jesus was born in a stable. That is what we celebrate at Christmas time, isn't it? And how low does he go? That's the God we worship brothers and sisters. He doesn't boast. He doesn't heap praise on himself. Instead he serves. What does he do with his disciples, on the night that he gets betrayed by Judas Iscariot? He stoops and washes his disciples feet (John 13). The God of the universe stoops down to wash humans feet. What right do we have to boast? what right do we have to be envious when Jesus himself stoops down?

This church, should be a church where we all are stooping down to serve one another. Do we go out of our way to serve one another? Someone recently told me that they feel that their gifts aren't being used. There's plenty to be done. And if I could say to this person, I would want to ask them, are they so concerned that their

gifts are being used because they want to boast? Or is it because they want to show love. I want to see them show love to others here.

Love does not envy, nor boast.

Love is not arrogant nor rude.

Love is not arrogant nor rude.

When Paul talks about arrogance, he's giving the image of something that is puffed up. It looks big, but it's just full of air. And that's what the church in Corinth was doing. People were arrogant, they were puffed up about different things. For example, they were puffed up about who might have baptised them. One may have been baptised by Paul. Other by Apollos. And another by Cephas. I once was at a church where this lady ask me what I was doing on my day off. But I could tell that the only reason why she asked me what I was doing was because she wasn't interested in me. It was so that she could tell me all the amazing things she was going to do. Puffing herself up, it was all empty.

Instead of being arrogant, we are to be polite. We are not to be rude. A preacher tells the story of a very elder man who walks into his church service. But there were no vacant seats. At once, every single man in the church stood up for the elderly man. Being a Christian, we are called to be polite. I think that this is so important these days. Sydney can be such a rude place. People have places to go, people to see. I once was yelled at in the car for driving too slow. Apparently safety wasn't an issue for this man! Politeness is Christian. We can speak truth... in love. We can be gracious with our words.

What about at church? When you're socialising at morning tea, attending bible studies, or church meetings are you carefully listening? Or do you talk over one another? Which one are you like more? As Christians we should be clamouring to serve one another, to seek each other's interests before our own. We should be seeking to share Christ's love with one another. Sharing each other's burdens.

Imagine if Jesus was arrogant or rude. I can't. Because he wasn't. Ever. Even when others were hurling insults at him, even when others were inappropriately accusing him of things that he didn't do, he went to the cross, like a sheep that was being slaughtered for you and me. He wasn't puffed up. He had every right to show off,

but he didn't. Instead he chose to humble himself, drawing near to us by taking on human flesh. He chose to lay his life down, the good shepherd laying his life down for the sheep. He shared his life with his disciples for three years. That's what we should be doing too.

Love is not arrogant nor rude.

It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable

Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable.

Paul tells us that we need to seek the interests of others before our own. That's what love is about. Sometimes, Rachel will ask me what I want for dinner. We're eating out, do you want grill'd or Mexican? And to my shame, I'll just choose what I want, even though, I know that Rachel's stomach isn't up for it. It's selfish of me. It's not loving. Paul tells us that love does not seek the things of oneself. Love seeks the interests of others. Our society, is built on the premise that if you seek your own interests first, then society is better off. Sadly, that premise has seeped its way into churches. That if we look out for number one, then our church will be better. To this day, I have not seen any passage in the Scriptures that talk about us putting ourselves as number one. I have not seen that at all. Instead, the bible tells us to give up your own interests, seek the interests of others, lay down your life like Jesus. That's what the church is meant to be. That's what being a Christian is about. Seeking the interests of others.

In fact, not insisting on your own way is linked with not being irritable. Because when you don't insist on your own way, then it's more than likely you will not get irritated. Do you get angry when things don't go your way? Love does not get angry when things don't go your way. Not being irritated means trusting that God has your best interests at heart. It means that you trust that famous passage in Romans 8, that we know that God works for the good of those who love him.

Love doesn't insist on its own way. Can you imagine if Jesus, on the cross, decided that he would insist on his own way instead of obeying the Father's will? That he decided that he would call down the legions of angels to save him on the cross, whilst his God forsaken him? That would be terrible for us, because we would not be saved from our sins. Jesus willingly lays his life down according to the Father's will for our benefit. And isn't that what we celebrate at Christmas time. That he

chose to humble himself, by becoming a human baby, and living on earth, choosing to dwell amongst us. And eventually dying on the cross for your sake and my sake.

Love does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable.

The Great Wedding

I was reflecting with David on the sermon last week because as you know I looked at this passage briefly last week. And next week we'll look at it again.

He was reflecting on how this passage is often read at weddings, and he correctly pointed out that weddings can point to the greatest wedding of all. The wedding between Jesus Christ, the bridegroom, and the church, his bride. That's why we can say, "Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind, Jesus does not envy, nor boast, Jesus is not arrogant nor rude, he does not insist on his own way, and is not irritable." That's who we are celebrating each and every Christmas. The gifts, the presents, the meals, are all nice. But we may forget that the true centre of Christmas is Jesus. When love has come down, taking on human flesh, becoming a man, for you and me. Jesus is love. Jesus is patient with you and me. Jesus is kind to you and me. Jesus does not envy nor boast but chose to humbly serve you and me. Jesus is not arrogant nor rude, but went to the cross for you and me. Jesus never insisted on his own way but trusted in his Father. Jesus is who we worship this Christmas.

Let's pray.