

1 Corinthians 13

Date: Sunday, 20 December 2020

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

Sermon: When Love Came Down III

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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

Drawing Near to Christmas

Five sleeps until Christmas. Wow, what a year that's gone by. Who would have thought that this year would have gone the way that it did. I remember there were weeks where Rachel and I were just home bound. Me with writing and filming sermons with my shirt and tie, and my pyjamas. It's really been a long year. And it can feel like we've just been surviving. Rather than thriving. It's like we've been running on the spot, and really getting nowhere. I mean, put your hand up if your plans for travel were upended this year? This year has really been a year which makes us realise that we are out of control. Right?

So as we draw near to Christmas, I thought it would be a great opportunity to see that even when life is out of control, we have Jesus who is not out of control. In fact, we have Jesus who has shown us love as he chose to dwell amongst us. We have Jesus, love who has come down. Jesus who can use even the difficulties and sufferings that we go through each day, for our good and his glory. We have Jesus who walks with us in our sufferings, who endures all things for us, who bore our sins for us. That's who we celebrate at Christmas time.

So we're going to look at 1 Corinthians 13 again. Last week, we looked at the first four pairings. Today, we're going to look at the rest of 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is not resentful

Love is not resentful. Wow. Talk about difficult. Have you ever held a grudge? Do you find it hard to forgive? Paul doesn't pull punches. Love is not resentful. Love does not count evil. Paul here in fact is using an accounting term, to count, to credit. It's like, do you keep a record of all the things, the bad things, that someone holds against you? And perhaps, you measure them up against what good they have done. Maybe when you're in an argument with someone, you show that you really are resentful. You bring up all the past wrongs that someone has done. You weigh people. Like those old fashion scales. Do the good deeds outweigh their bad deeds?

We can be tempted to do that. We measure people and they can be found wanting. Love does not do that. It is not resentful. It forgives. Readily. Even when the other person doesn't repent, we don't hold these things against them. Love doesn't succumb to bitterness, it doesn't hold grudges. Is that you? Is it awkward between you and other people because you secretly hold against others what they've done in the past? Do we gossip behind their backs? Do we speak more about the wrongs that they commit rather than speak of how God has been working on them. To my shame, I have talked more about how people commit wrongs, rather than rejoice in how God has changed them

That's not love! Imagine, for a moment, that when you were face to face with God, and he decided to count all the evil you did against you. That he decided to replay every moment of your life. Every thought that you thought. Every action, and every time you chose not to act. And he measured and counted everything against you. We would be found wanting. But the gospel tells us that even when we are found wanting, God in his love decides to send his only begotten son into the world. To save his enemies, you and me. He sends his son, so that we might be clothed in righteousness. That we might inherit the kingdom of God. That we may not be slaves to sin, but slaves to God! That we might be his children. That Jesus might be our friend. That's the blessing that God is to us, and it's what we celebrate Christmas for.

When we consider all that God has done even when we had deserve wrath. How can we be resentful of others? Especially when we realise how gracious and merciful God has been to us?

Love is not resentful.

Love does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices in truth

Paul then says, love does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices in the truth. These are two sides of the same coin.

Love does not rejoice in the evil. Do we delight in the mishaps of other people? Do we rejoice when someone we don't really like takes a tumble, suffers. We may not say it, but our hearts tell us that. We say to ourselves, "They got what they deserved!" Our hearts should not be one for revenge but one of love. Imagine, if for a

moment, we received from God what we ourselves deserved for our sins. Then we really would say, "There but for the grace of God, there go I."

Maybe we don't rejoice in evil, but we're ambivalent to it. We see homelessness, we see abuse, and we turn our heads. Rachel and I celebrated our anniversary a couple of weeks ago, and we were in Newtown at this Japanese restaurant. After the meal, I decided that we would go walking around. And there were homeless people. And my natural instinct, was to ignore it, pretend that they were nothing. Maybe we don't think that COVID is that harmful, that those in the high risk category don't deserve to be protected or we think to ourselves that "They got what they deserved." Love doesn't do that. Love is not ambivalent to the sufferings others go through.

In fact, love rejoices with the truth. It rejoices when justice is done. Do we rejoice when truth is proclaimed? I love how Jesus declares that he is the way, the life, and the truth. Love rejoices in Jesus. Love rejoices in what Jesus has done for you and for me. Love rejoices in the character of God. His perfection, his promises to his people that never fail, his steadfast love to us through Jesus. Do we rejoice in Jesus? Each and everyday, do we fall more in love with who Jesus is, and what he has done? Rejoicing in the truth of Jesus. It's what Paul prays often for people. For example, in the book of Ephesians, Paul prays that people would be rooted and grounded in love. He prays that we may understand the breadth, depth, height and length of the love of Christ for us. That we might be filled with the fullness of God.

Is the Word of God something that we delight to read and spend time in? Do we rejoice in God and his grace? What is it that we rejoice in the most? Is it winning an argument, being right or do we rejoice in Jesus? Or do we rejoice in meaningless things. Netflix, sport, games? This Christmas, will we rejoice in the gifts that we receive, the meal we share with others? Or do we rejoice most in Jesus Christ who chose to take on human flesh for you and me.

Love does not rejoice in evil but rejoices in the truth.

Love believes all things, hopes all things

Love believes all things, hopes all things

When Paul talks about believes all things, he's not talking about being gullible. Paul believes that there is truth, otherwise you can't rejoice in truth. But when Paul talks about believing all things, he's talking about a love that never ceases to trust God. He's talking about taking God at his Word. Love believes God. Believing that he loves you with an everlasting love. Isn't that what Christmas is about. Believing that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that we might have eternal life.

Love believes all things. So I want to ask you. Is this who we are? Do we take God at his Word? When he tells us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus, do we believe it. Do we believe that he has shown us his love towards us through Jesus Christ, in him dying and rising from the grave? When we read the Scriptures, do we find ourselves believing that this is God speaking to us, personally? Do we find ourselves delighting in it? Love believes God. It believes the Word and it holds onto the truth.

And do we hope all things? Paul here is talking about our future. And he's talking about hoping that God's will would be done on earth. That God's justice will prevail over the evil in this world. He's talking about whether we have our minds and our hearts set on the things above. Love does that. It hopes for the future. It hopes that things will get better. Maybe not tomorrow, but eventually we can find our hope fulfilled. Isn't that what we need? Hope? Especially in a year like this one. This year has been tough for me mentally and spiritually. It's a year where it feels like we're spinning wheels. No forward motion. There have been days where I have felt the pressure personally. But love hopes for when things will be better. A hope when sin in this world is finally removed. No more tears, no more suffering. What gets you through the suffering of today? Isn't it hope? And as Christians, we have the ultimate hope, when this world will be made new. When death shall be no more, when we will have bodies that no longer creak, hurt, die.

And don't we have that certainty of hope? Because 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ came into this world that sin, death and satan might be conquered. That's who we are celebrating this Christmas, every Christmas. That's what we are holding onto. The reason why we can hope for our future is because it has been secured by Jesus in the past. Through his birth, death and resurrection. Do you hope? And more importantly, what are you finding your hope in? Do we hope for when Jesus returns? Or is our hope so small that we hope in possessions? Money? Fame? Popularity? Or in Jesus?

Love believes all things, hopes all things.

Love bears all things, endures all things

But love bears all things, endures all things. Paul's talking about how we deal with our present.

Love bears all things. Paul, when he talks about bearing. He's actually using a word that you might use when you talk about roofs. A roof bears over us right now here at church, or at home. A roof covers over us to protect us. Peter himself tells us that we are to keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8 ESV) Is that our love for one another here? Covering over sins, ready to forgive? Do we pray for one another that we would be able to show love for them in ways that show the love of Christ?

Love bears all. But also endures. Paul is talking about suffering. Life can be tough. Bad days are normal. Especially as we wait for Jesus to return. But love, endures all things. What does that mean? A pastor gives a helpful example. Sometimes, you see at the Olympics, there's these weightlifters. And they have to hold up these massive weights. For like 3 seconds over their heads. That's the kind of picture that we should see when Paul is talking about enduring. We endure the weight of difficulties. Maybe for you, it's health problems. Or maybe, it's enduring relationship difficulties. Family burdens that weigh on your heart. Maybe it's work, the difficulties you have because of what's happened to you at work. Paul tells us that is what love looks like. It endures the pain and suffering. Maybe like how Job endured the suffering he went through, not knowing why he was going through the suffering.

How on earth can we learn to endure such suffering? How do we get the strength to endure the pain, to persevere even when it's terribly painful? Well, the answer is what we celebrate at Christmas. We learn to endure, because Jesus Christ came into this world to endure the greatest burden for you and me. The burden of sin on his shoulders at the cross. He endured that, the worst thing in the world so that we may be able to endure any suffering we go through. On the cross, Jesus Christ acts as a cover for us, shielding us from the wrath of God. He covered all our sins.

Do you find yourself cracking under the unbearable distress of life? Look to Jesus, because he took on the most unbearable pain for you. Do you struggle to love oth-

ers? Look to Jesus because he covered you from the wrath that you and I deserved from God.

Love bears all things, endures all things.

Love never falls

Finally, love never falls. It never ends. Paul's argument throughout this chapter is that you can be the most skilled teacher, you can have all these skills. But if you do not have love, it is worthless. You might be gifted. You can give the greatest gifts to others, but if you do not have love, then you are nothing. We need love!

Paul is saying that love is steady. Love never fails, never gives up, it never gives in. All spiritual gifts will fade away, but love, it is the constant. It doesn't fall to the ground. Christmas can be extravagant, we can give and receive the greatest gifts to one another. We can have the greatest most extravagant meals, but if we do not have love for one another. Then it's nothing. If we do not remember the love that Jesus Christ gives us, then Christmas is nothing. There needs to be love. And it should be the constant here at church. We can be busy here at church, there's much to do right? But if we do not have love, then it's worthless. We can do all the ministry in the world, but do not have love, then there's no point doing it.

Maybe we find it difficult to hear this that love never falls. We've seen it in the love that others have had for us. They've just given up on us, it's disappointed us, it's broken us. Maybe we know in our hearts of times where our love has failed others. But Paul's point is to turn our eyes off ourselves, and to look to Jesus. Remember how I said that we can replace love with Jesus? Jesus is patient, Jesus is kind, Jesus does not envy. Jesus is not resentful. Jesus rejoices in the truth. Well, Jesus never fails. His love never failed. It's why we celebrate Christmas. Jesus coming into the world, that he might through his life, death and resurrection, show us love that never fails. Jesus' love on the cross never failed. It will never disappoint us, because he has secured the greatest gift for you. Yes, there are disappointments in this lifetime, but even then, Jesus uses those for our good.

So... it's five days to Christmas. Here's a challenge. When we wake on Christmas Day, will we celebrate the greatest gift to us we can ever receive? Will we celebrate the love that came down from heaven, Jesus Christ, who draws near to you and me? Will we give thanks to God for the love that he has shown through his son? A

love that is patient, a love that is kind, a love that is not envy nor boast, a love that is not arrogant nor rude, a love that is not resentful but chose to forgive, a love that does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices in the truth, a love that bears all, endures all, believes all, and hopes all. Jesus, the one who never fails for you and me.

Let's pray.