

“THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE”

Pastor Mike Corwin

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7, 13

GOD’S WORD: 1 JOHN 4:7-12

I – WHAT IS LOVE?:

We have just spent the last year highlighting what Jesus said were the two greatest commandments...love God and then love each other. Pastor Becky and I told you that the loving God commandment referred to our worship, the loving each other referred to our faith family here. We projected and preached this theme over and over to you. It is only fitting that we continue with this subject of love through our Advent services.

As I was thinking about this it dawned on me...do we even know the love we are speaking about? Do we know the definition so we can put it into practice? Or is it just another word?

Let me ask you this quick question: JUST HOW IMPORTANT IS LOVE TO YOU? (Let congregation speak).

II – DEFINITION:

To truly be able to answer this question I think you would need to know the definition of love. Everyone in the room may well have their own and that would inspire the answer you give. Our definition would probably depend on our own experience of love, or the lack of it. Our age may be a large factor in our answers. Being 16 and “in love” is quite different than the love we develop and may describe in our 40’s, 50’s, 60’s or beyond.

So to do this right we probably need to have the definition of love. If you look the word up in the dictionary you are going to find a large list of definitions. Let me just give you the top two

- A deep and tender feeling of affection for, or attachment or devotion to, a person or persons.
- A feeling of brotherhood and good will toward other people.

As you skip to the bottom of the list you will find the theological definition of love which is:

- God’s benevolent concern for humankind and humankind’s devout attachment to God.

So, having these definitions to work with now let me re-ask the question: HOW IMPORTANT IS LOVE TO YOU? (Discussion with congregation again).

In his book, “The Awakened Heart,” Dr. Gerald May states: “There is a desire within each of us, in the deep center of ourselves, that we call our heart. We were born with it, it is never completely satisfied, and it never dies. We are often unaware of it, but it is always awake. It is the human desire for love. Every person on this earth yearns to love, to be loved, and to know love. Our very reason for being is to be found in this desire for love.”

God made us with an acute need to love and be loved. There have been studies conducted with infants that indicate that they will not attain normal development if they do not receive human contact. If they are deprived of cuddling and nurturing they suffer a permanent loss of motor skills and mental awareness. We need human contact as much as the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat.

And I don’t want you to think about this in just your relationships with other people, but the one you have with God too. What do you suffer when you don’t have loving contact with him?

III – TEXT:

In the Scripture that has come to be known as the “love chapter” the apostle Paul gives us God’s definition of love. He says:

1 Corinthians 13:1-7, 13 (NLT)

Love Is the Greatest

13 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing. ³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.

⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

¹³ Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

This is the passage you hear most generally read at weddings. It is to give the new couple the idea that love is probably the greatest thing there is in their lives. Paul minces no words and lets you know that no matter what else you have going for you in your life, no matter what all of your accomplishments have been, no

matter what awards you've received, what sacrifices you've made, or how much money you've given away. If it wasn't done out of love you've missed the whole point of the Bible...you aren't aware of God's wishes for the Kingdom, and the teachings of Jesus obviously didn't register with you.

And I need to remind you that love is an action word. If you tell your wife and children you love them but then come home drunk and beat them, you aren't loving them, you're hating them. If you look at the poor and the needy and tell them you love them, but do nothing to ease their pain all you've done is utter the word, you haven't loved them.

Love comes alive and has meaning only when it is put into action. Love can heal a broken spirit. Love can give meaning and purpose to life. Love can bring peace and reconciliation to broken relationships. Love has the power to change the world. But these things only happen when we live up to our belief that we need to be "GOD'S LOVE IN ACTION."

As a church family we share a special love – a love for each other and the love of Christ. This is a love we should not keep to ourselves. There are so many who do not know of this special love because they do not have a church family to love or to love them back. So many who have never known the love of knowing Jesus. If we are full of God's love it will overflow to others. Those who have no idea they have a God and Savior who love them unconditionally and want to hug them through all of life.

IV – ADVENT:

Christmas is all about love. It is about loving others. It's about being patient and kind. Christmas is about showing hope to others as they endure what seem to be hopeless circumstances. And Christmas is about slowing down and reflecting on God's great gift to us. "God so LOVED the world that he gave his only Son." God put his love into action.

During this Advent time, as we reflect on this bundle of love that God sent us in a baby, we need to continually ask ourselves, "How important is love, to us and to others?" You see love is a transferable gift. God gives us love, so that we can better love others. We all have the power to make a difference in the world by touching others with acts of love.

V – 1 CORINTHIANS CHRISITMAS VERSION:

Let me close by sharing with you the Christmas version of our Scripture from Corinthians this morning:
If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights, and shiny glass balls but do not show love to my neighbor, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals, and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity but do not show love to others, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties, and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at others to get out of the way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust, but giving the gift of love will endure.

May this be the year you discover the real and deep meaning of Christmas in new and wonderful ways. May you find the love God sent.

Amen