

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, “The Gift of Love”

10.18.20

SO hilarious and SO true... “Use your words”... Words...yes, words used with the RIGHT MOTIVE and in the right way to express LOVE...yes...that’s powerful thing. Like these words:

John 3:16

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Like these words about love:

1 Thessalonians 4:9

⁹ Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.

Like these words of love...the words of Jesus:

John 13:34-35

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Words of love!! Yet, these kinds of words were not being used or followed by the church in Corinth. They were NOT loving one another. Instead, this was a church... (“supposed disciples of Jesus”), who were using words of selfishness and arrogance in very UNLOVING ways toward one another. To use the vernacular of our day: there was great DRAMA in that church. There was constant drama: fussing, fighting, backbiting and arguing with one another...to the point they were even suing one another... quite simply: most of the congregation seemed to be out for himself. And this is the backdrop for where we find ourselves as we come to chapter 13...

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 13.

We find ourselves today in what’s called the “Love Chapter.” A chapter that has been described, by many, as the most beautiful chapter ever penned by the apostle Paul. Words of amazing eloquence and poetry. Words that I have used in every marriage I’ve ever performed... WORDS OF LOVE.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

¹If 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,^[a] but have not love, I gain nothing.

Now, as we begin, let me ask some questions by way of review. (These are easy,☺) Was the Corinthian Church unified? NO. Were they being kind to one another? NO. Did they give evidence that they loved one another? NO. And you see, Church family, this is precisely why I believe the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to stop mid-stream in talking about spiritual gifts...(isn’t that what we’ve been talking about),



Paul stops midstream in this discussion of spiritual gifts to talk about love.

Now I want you go back up, in your Bibles, to the end of chapter 12, verse 31...

1 Corinthians 12:31

³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

You see, the Corinthian church was struggling mightily with an improper understanding of spiritual gifts. They were fighting and arguing over who had “what” gift and they were literally trying to show-up on another in their church services...it was a fiasco. So, here at the end of chapter 12, (knowing that we’ve just been through all the spiritual gifts), Paul stops and says... “You guys are missing the point of why God has gifted you...you guys are chasing the gifts that are the most showy gifts...the gifts of miracles and healings and tongues...and that shouldn’t be your focus, because there is ‘...still a more excellent way.’” What is that way? One word: LOVE! **Watch verse 1 again...**

1 Corinthians 13:1

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.

You see, Paul brings up the gift of tongues (languages) first, because that’s what they were the most focused on. (And church, we’re going to see THAT very fact in great detail in chapter 14 for 40 verses. It’s going to take 3 messages to work through that chapter, because this was the #1 issue they had regarding spiritual gifts.) And that’s why Paul makes the point he did. He said, “I don’t care what kind of language you can speak...even if you could speak the language of the angels, (and by the way, that’s hyperbole...there is nothing recorded in the Bible about an “angelic language.”)...the point is...it doesn’t matter if you speak the most eloquent language known to man or angels...if you don’t have love...it’s worthless...in fact, you are just noise-maker... like, well...one of these...



Ever seen one of these... a monkey playing symbols. TALK ABOUT ANNOYING!




Listen, here's the application: if I stood up here and preached the most eloquent and amazing message you've ever heard in your life...I mean a message that would rival the great Billy Graham, but if I walked off this platform and was a jerk to you or to someone in your family...how would that make you feel? The message wouldn't matter would it... It would ring hollow, wouldn't it?

You see, I know some speakers, even "so-called" preachers who can play an audience like a piano. They can arouse emotion, persuade, cajole, convince...(you've seen them on TV) but, off the platform, they are some of the most self-centered, self-aggrandizing people you'll ever meet. Oh, they may have the gift of swaying crowds with their words, but spend 10 minutes with them...and you'll see a different person. No...it's not about the eloquence of your speech, your tongue, your language...it's about the sincerity and love found in your heart. LOVE...let's talk about that word...

We've been throwing it around for about 10 minutes now...what does it mean? I can say I love pizza or I love Carolina or Duke basketball, or I love my wife. Does it all mean the same thing? My wife of 30 years would say, "I sure hope not!" I sure hope you love me more than pizza or Carolina basketball. 😊

Well, of course I do...but we have a difficult time describing "love" in the English language because we only have one word, where the Greeks had four words... See them...

THE 4 GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE

<p>1 </p> <p>STORGE</p> <p>The Greek word describing family love, the naturally developing affectionate bond between parents, siblings & family members.</p> <p>Pronounced: STOR-jay</p>	<p>2 </p> <p>EROS</p> <p>The Greek word for sensual or romantic love.</p> <p>Pronounced: AIR-ohs</p>
<p>3 </p> <p>PHILIA</p> <p>The type of emotional love between good friends, brotherly love, love for humanity & those in need etc.</p> <p>Pronounced: FILL-ee-uh</p>	<p>4 </p> <p>AGAPE</p> <p>The highest of the four types of love as it is the divine love that comes from God. As God is love itself, it means Agape love is perfect, unconditional & a pure love.</p> <p>Pronounced: Uh-GAH-pay</p>

#1 Storge...that's the love you have for your family...your mom, your dad...your son or daughter. **#2 Eros**...that's the word for erotic love or romantic love...think of Valentine's Day. **#3 Philia**...think of the city of Philadelphia...the city of Brotherly love. This is the love you have for a close friend or confidant. And finally, **#4 Agape**...that's unconditional love...that's the highest form of love...that's the love that Jesus has for us and that God showed us by sending His only Son to die for us. (Side note...I Storge, Pam; Eros, Pam; Philia, Pam, and Agape, Pam.)

Guess which Greek word is used throughout chapter 13? **Agape**. Look at verse 2. Paul moves to the next set of spiritual gifts to juxtapose against LOVE. He's going to move from the gift of tongues to four other gifts.

1 Corinthians 13:2

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.

He mentions four gifts there: Prophecy, Discernment (understanding mysteries), Knowledge and Faith. Let's talk about these...

Prophecy...now remember, those who have this gift differ from the Old Testament Prophets who spoke directly from God, like Jeremiah or Isaiah. Today, those who prophesy are those who have the ability to take the Word of God and use it to exhort, correct, comfort, inspire and ultimately equip with it. Who does that sound like? Well, usually someone like me...a pastor/shepherd.

Now here's what's interesting... We're going to discover that this gift is the one gift that made the list of gifts that Paul pushes the hardest. **Look down in your bibles at chapter 14, verse 1...**

1 Corinthians 14:1

¹ Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

Why? Why is the ability to teach and equip with the Word of God (to prophesy) more important than speaking in an unknown tongue? **Jump down to verse 20.**

1 Corinthians 14:20-25

²⁰ Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. ²¹ In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." ²² Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign^[c] not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³ If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, ²⁵ the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

And isn't that what we want? Don't we want for people to come in here and see Jesus lifted up and see and experience His power as the Word of God is preached? YES! And that's Paul's point to the Corinthians. He was saying, "Y'all are not showing love to one another in your meetings...you are all speaking out of turn and you are creating a chaotic mess and if an UNBELIEVER comes in...they're go to think you're crazy and likely say, 'Nope, I want NO part of that.'"

Remember the words of Jesus that we looked at earlier?

John 13:34-35

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The Corinthians weren't showing this in their services. Look back at verse 2...the next 2 gifts...

1 Corinthians 13:2

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.

Mysteries and Knowledge...Those are the gifts of Discernment and Knowledge...and you will remember they are very, very similar... If you have the gift of discernment, you can size up a situation or a person pretty quickly as to whether or not they are right or wrong, honest or dishonest. If you have the gift of knowledge, you have the ability to properly apply the Word of God...(where all knowledge comes from) and provide a proper understanding of circumstances and situations. In other words, you can connect people to the truth of the Word of God to make good, sound decisions.

But, here's the deal...you can have all of those amazing gifts and yet, be unloving and it's worthless! Remember Ephesians 4:20? We speak the truth how...

Ephesians 4:20

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

Church, this goes right back to not being a jerk when you share discernment, or knowledge, or wisdom. We must do it in love. Love is the key... You see, people are much more apt to take what we have to say...even when it's difficult, if we do in a spirit of LOVE. Think with me about the fruit of the Spirit... What comes first of the 9 flavors of the fruit?

Galatians 5:22-23a

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control.

There's no accident here...LOVE comes first... How about the next gift? Back to verse 2: Faith.

1 Corinthians 13:2b

² ...and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Do you remember when we talked about the Christian who has extreme faith? If that have that gift, they have the kind of faith that takes God at His Word and they put their full weight on Him for extraordinary things...but if they don't have love...it's nothing! Even if they have the faith to move mountains.

Did you catch that phrase? Paul is parroting the words of Jesus from Matthew 17. See the screens:

Matthew 17:20b

²⁰ For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

That's hyperbole again...because there's no way any of us can (let's say), move Rendezvous Mountain over here and throw it into W. Kerr Scott Lake... That's not what Jesus was meaning... The mountain is a metaphor for an "impossible task." Meaning, you can trust the Lord to do something that's seemingly impossible with just a little bit of faith. Aren't you glad that nothing is too hard for God! But, here we go again...you can have this kind of TREMENDOUS FAITH, you're a rock...you never waiver, you trust the Lord in all things...but if you are not loving, it's all for naught, nothing!

And then Paul concludes this line of teaching... And this is perhaps the most amazing example yet... You can actually be a martyr for Jesus and still not be loving...

1 Corinthians 13:3

³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,^[a] but have not love, I gain nothing.

Don't miss that last phrase: "I gain nothing." I. Do you understand what Paul is saying? He's saying: "You've made all these spiritual gifts all about yourself." I gain nothing...even if I am burned for the cause of Christ. In other words, if my motive is wrong...if I'm not doing what I'm doing out love for Jesus...but instead, for myself...even if I burn at the stake, it's for nothing! Listen...don't people die as martyrs every day...



What is this? That's 911. That's wicked, twisted men...who believed if they died as a martyrs for their faith...radical Islam...they'd wake up to 72 virgin maidens in paradise. No...that's not where they are. Listen, dying as a martyr for the wrong reason doesn't mean you have love. You can have hate in your heart and die as a martyr. I would argue that at this very moment...those men have NOTHING. And that's the point... See it one last time...

1 Corinthians 13:3

³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned,^[a] but have not love, I gain nothing.

As we begin to close, I want to ask you to **turn in your Bibles to Revelation, chpt 2**. As you are turning, I'll ask you this: Do you remember where Paul is, as he's writing this letter? In Ephesus. Did you know Jesus spoke to the church at Ephesus via the pen of the Apostle John? He did. Pick up with me in Revelation chapter 2, verse 4 and we'll see the words of Jesus to the church at Ephesus:

Revelation 2:4-5

⁴But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

I read this quote earlier this week...and I close with it...and I want you to see it and think about it:

"If people can learn to give and receive love, they'll usually recover from their physical or mental illness." Dr. Henry Cloud, clinical psychologist, Christian author

Church family, this is the point of the entire message...a message that's been about LOVE...AGAPE...a message found in the middle of a teaching on Spiritual Gifts... And here's what we can't miss. Are you listening?

You and I can have everything in this life...you and I can everything going for us... we can be the most gifted person on the face of the earth...we can have status, prestige, charisma, good looks, and charm...abounding in talent...but, if we can't give and receive love, it's all for nothing!!



It's annoying!!! And we're certainly not going to draw anyone to Jesus! We'll repel them.

So, how goes it with you? Have you abandoned your first love? Are you a loving person? Are you known to be a loving person? Or do you find yourself being short-tempered or mean-spirited most of the time? How would people describe you? Do you have a hard time getting along with others? Do you have a hard time getting along with yourself? Maybe this morning, you need to ask the Lord to restore love in your heart...maybe some need to ask the Lord to take the pain from your life...

Just say, "Lord, make me loving...take this pain...from me and help me to truly feel love...agape love... Help me to love like you love me. Help me Lord...TO LOVE!"

You know what we need to do: **Use your words** to talk to Him and ask Him. Let do that now.