

The Virtues



Path to the Good Life
The Theological Virtues

The Pastor's Class
Cary Presbyterian Church

The course

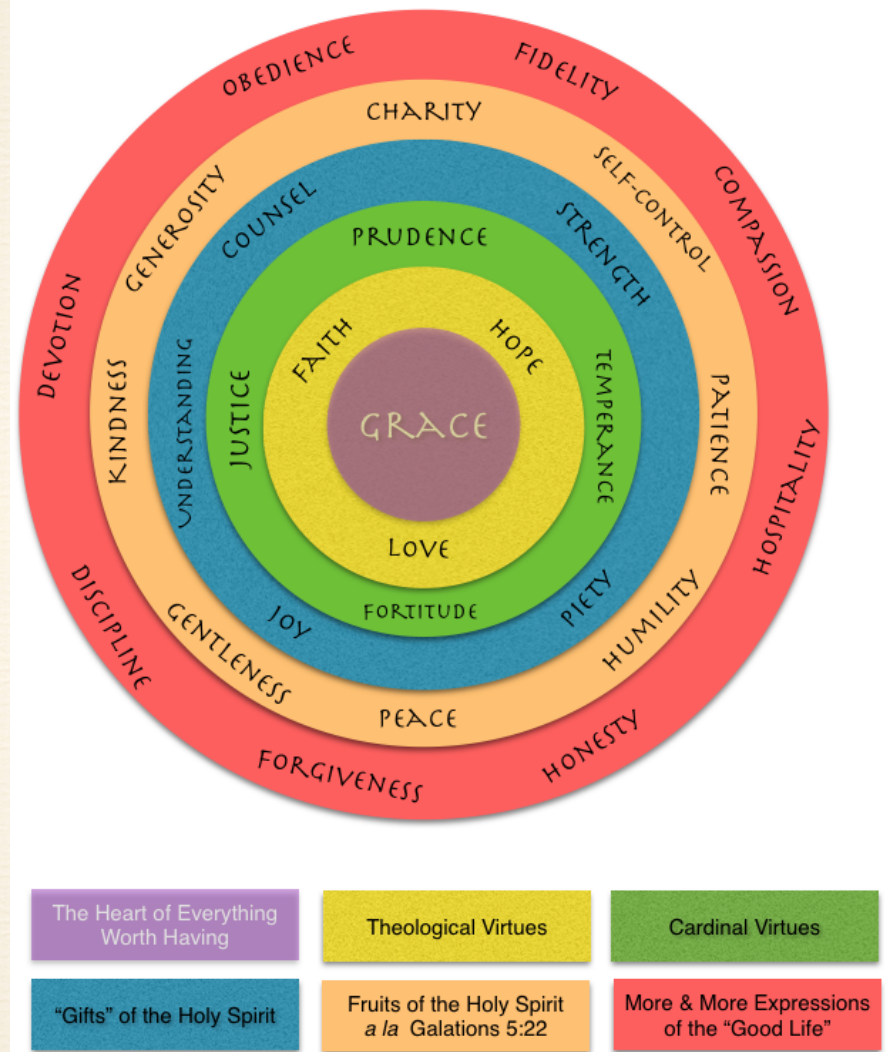
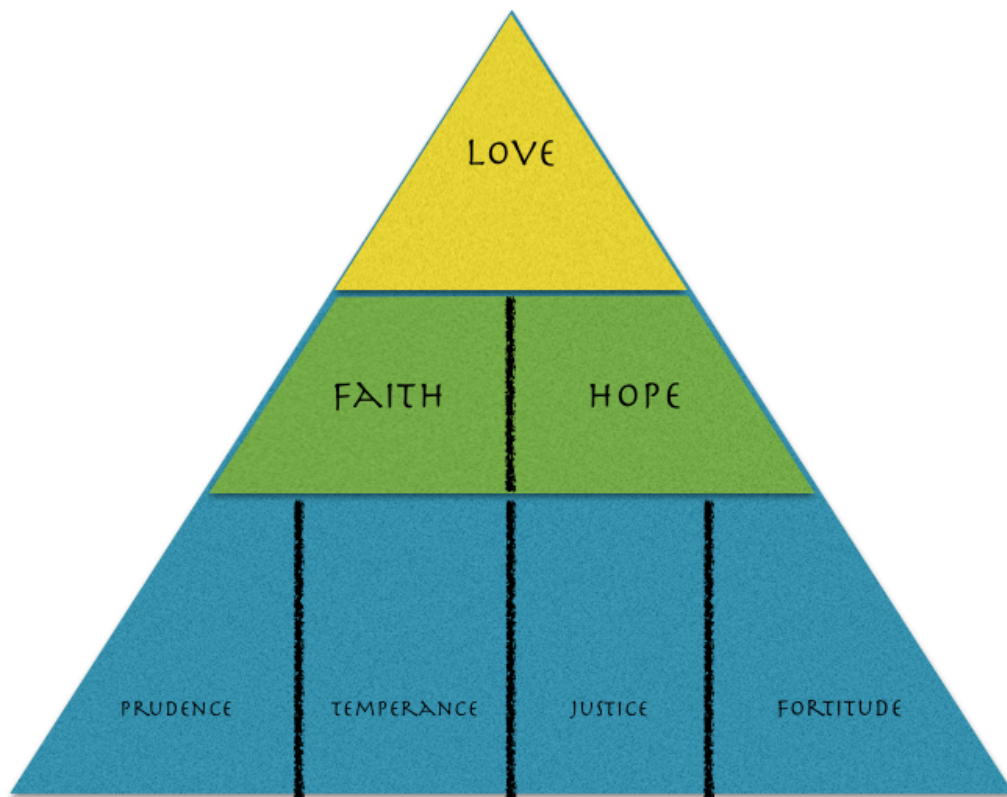
Sunday 9:15 - 10:15 AM

- † Virtues & Moral Theology - An Introduction
- † *The Cardinal Virtues*: Prudence, Temperance, Justice, Fortitude
- † ***The Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, Love***
- † Exploring the 7 Deadly Sins and Heavenly Virtues

A Quick Recapitulation of Last Week

- ❖ **Prudence** — wisdom. *Rightly knowing one's place in the world, and developing the capacity to know/perceive things as they really are so that we act rightly.*
- ❖ **Temperance** — moderation. Temperance is the virtue which inclines us to desire and enjoy pleasures well. Temperance is the virtue of “moderation.” It is the virtue which urges upon us the value of finding the middle way.
- ❖ **Justice** — right human relationships. Justice is the virtue which aids us in maintaining workable human relationships - and in a larger sense, a workable human community. Justice allows us to give each and every person what they are due - or what they deserve, and by doing so preserves peace and harmony between people.
- ❖ **Fortitude** — patience, perseverance. This is the virtue that allows us to face difficulties well.

For the Visual Learners



The Theological Virtues

I Cor 13:13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

- ❖ **Faith** — is the virtue that enables us to believe (trust) well in answering the “big questions” of life.
- ❖ **Hope** — is the virtue that enables us to cling to union with God as a final destiny even in the face of the sin which separates us from one another and from God.
- ❖ **Love** — is the virtue of living out our lives in self-giving charity.

The Theological Virtues

A Few Preliminary Remarks — Your World View Shapes Your Sense of Virtue

- ❖ **Virtues Require A Truthful Grasp of the Way Things Really Are** — This is one reason *Prudence* was so important. Obviously, people of any particular faith have their perception of “the way things really are” skewed by the claims of their faith tradition.
 - ❖ Something as simple as believing that “God *is* present and *does* matter.”
- ❖ **Lucretius & Epicureanism** — An Atomist/Materialist.
 - ❖ Banish Pain, Cease Worry, Seek Out Pleasures (not debauchery but tranquility).
 - ❖ The “greatest joy” is to look upon the misery of others from the lofty perch of knowing better. As an Atomist he sees no interdependent connections for happiness.
 - ❖ Fear of death is what drives irrational belief in metaphysical gods. But we should not fear death because it is merely the end of us - no life beyond to worry about.

The Theological Virtues

Epicurean thought as it instructs questions of human intimacy

- ❖ Arousal is not about a *relationship*. It is about a *body*.
- ❖ Therefore one should keep focussed on physical desire and avoid romantic desire because romance inevitably brings on storms of passion and leads to “waves of delusion and incertitude.”
- ❖ Unlike physical attraction which can be satiated, romantic love entangles you in a life-time of renegotiation with the other - which moves you away from tranquility and therefore to unhappiness.

The Theological Virtues

Christian thought as it instructs questions of human intimacy

- ❖ Self-giving, interpersonal communion is the point of life.
- ❖ A Communion of Love — *a relationship of self-giving love* is at the very heart of what we believe about God (Trinity).
- ❖ The greatest commandment is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”
[Luke 10:27]
- ❖ Good human intimacy is intimacy which grows out of the desire to have and maintain *a relationship of mutual self-giving union*.

The Theological Virtues — Faith

Gal. 3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! ² The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? ⁴ Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. ⁵ Well then, does God^a supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

The Theological Virtues — Faith

Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

The Theological Virtues — Faith

I Cor 13:13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

- ❖ **Faith** — [Faith is] “ . . . a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely-given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” — John Calvin
- ❖ Not a list of theological doctrines to which we must ascribe.
- ❖ A *relationship* of “trust” that God is lovingly disposed toward us. “Faith” is to trust that this is the *truth of our situation*.
- ❖ Luke 2:10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. . . . 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

The Theological Virtues — Faith

I Cor 13:13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

- ❖ **Faith** — is to live in a certain kind of confidence even though there is much that remains clouded and unclear.
- ❖ 1Cor. 13:8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.