

1 Corinthians 13:1-13
“The Immensity of Love”
May 14-15, 2022
Easter 5

"And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love."

I don't know if you are the kind of people who keep up with the news, but I recently read a fairly troubling article. In the DC area, there is an attacker who has been on the loose for the past couple of weeks. His more than a dozen targets have been unsuspecting pedestrians on the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail on the city's outskirts. Many have stopped using this trail out of fear, and despite putting the city on high alert and placing extra eyes in the area around the path. And there are now three government currently agencies looking to find this attacker.

While it may be troubling, it's also a little comical because this elusive attacker is a turkey. I'm seriously not joking, there is a turkey that has been terrorizing people for months, and they can't get him. And I know I shouldn't laugh because few people have had to go to the hospital for tetanus shots and antibiotics for their cuts. But it just seems like it would be so easy to do, to catch a turkey.

Well, I think that oftentimes we run into the trap of thinking that things are much simpler than they seem. And the focus of our Sunday and our text points one out to us. Jesus, in our Gospel lesson, tells his disciples: Love one another; that is how they will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. And that sounds simple enough. In our text in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul describes what love is. He is telling what love looks like in detail among the followers of Jesus Christ:

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

And if we run down the list, we see that love is no small thing. It's patient; It doesn't let mean, or even malicious actions lead to anger. It's Kind; it seeks to help others. It does not envy; It is happy with its portion and is actually glad for another who has more. It is not Proud; it never overestimates its own importance. It doesn't dishonor others; it always seeks to give others significance and respect. It is not Self-seeking; it doesn't do what is suitable for itself but for others. It doesn't get angry; it's ok with suffering that must be borne; it hopes and thinks the best of and for the best for everyone around, and doesn't even remember when others have hurt us.

And we could examine all of these in detail on what each point about love truly means, but we could be here for ages. But even in this brief introduction to the immensity of what Christian love is, I think it becomes very apparent by ourselves it is impossible for us to do.

Not even that, it's not even something that desirable, left to ourselves and our own sinful flesh. Because why would you ever want to do that? Why would you like to think the best of others and give yourself credit? Why would you want to let it go when somebody wrongs you? Why would you want to seek to do good for other people while you yourself get left behind? Why would you ever want to look to and for others and their success, glory, fame, fortune, and benefit while getting nothing in return? Because that's the way that the world operates, that's the standard.

Well, for us as Christians, it's clear, isn't it? It's because love, this love, true Christian love, is something that God showed perfectly to us. These aspects of love are all of the things that Jesus did and delivered to us first. Even though humans have despised him and disobeyed him and cursed his name, God was patient with us. Even though our sins outnumber the grains of sand on the shores of the sea, God sent his Son and wiped our records clean with the blood of the Lamb. Jesus walked this earth and embodied kindness to all he met by healing the sick, instructing the weak, and being a friend to those who were despised. The perfect selfless love of God was shown perfectly when he offered himself on the cross of all people, for all sinful people, so that we can be saved.

The description of love that Paul gives is really a testimony of the perfect love that is embodied by God himself. God doesn't just act in love; God is love. The whole reason that we are saved is not because of anything that we have done but purely because God loved us even when we did not love him.

That is where all true love originates. Christian love stands under the sign of the cross. Its readiness for serving others, for humility in action and attitude, help and kindness, respect and owes its very existence to the mercy of God and the sacrificial death of Christ. The immensity of God's love was shown and brought to completion throughout the very Son of God, Jesus.

It is only through Christ, through faith, through grace, that we as Christians have the ability and desire to show love to the world around us. And it is a noble and a humbling thing to offer. The highest attainable goal for Paul himself is an imitation of Christ for the good of the Church. In love, the work of God and the work of man unite.

There is something special and comforting for you and I in this text on showing Christian love to all around us. Paul does not describe love in the world ending sacrifices, martyrdoms, and triumphs. We may sometimes be discouraged that we don't have the ability to have millions of dollars to show love to those in need, be able to stand up firm and publicly against the harm that

others are experiencing, or stand in the line of fire to show love to others. But Paul shows us that love, immense Christian love, can be demonstrated by all of us.

Love is shown in the ordinary circumstances of life. You can show true Christian love that imitates Christ himself when you are patient with your family. You can show true Christian love that points to your Savior in your workplace when you simply are humble in your abilities and generous in your words to others. You can show true Christian love, even to a stranger, when you simply put the best construction on the words they say or the actions they take.

True, immense Christian love is something that is so powerful in a world that is filled with darkness. Because it is so unnatural, so different, so foreign to the natural state of things, and this is why we should strive to be loving. The show of Christian love in a fallen world points powerfully to the cross. Acting in love to those around us imitates the things that Jesus did while he was on this earth. It gives a glorious testimony to the Savior we profess and the salvation we possess

The turkey in Washington DC, as far as I know, is still loose and is proving very difficult to catch. And I think that we as Christians understand that showing true Christian love can be a lot more challenging to do than we sometimes think in a world full of sin. But looking at the immense love that God showed to all of us, we know what love is, and we also understand why we should. Why would I ever forgive someone who hurt me? Because my Savior forgave me. Why would I ever be humble in my achievements? Because I know I have nothing that my loving Savior didn't give me even though I didn't deserve it? Why would I love in a world so loveless? Because my Jesus loves me. Amen.