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*Love Is....*

***1 Corinthians 13:1-13***

*If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but **do not have love**, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> 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 **do not have love**, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,<sup>[a]</sup> but **do not have love**, I gain nothing. <sup>4</sup> **Love is patient; love is kind**; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> **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. <sup>9</sup> For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup> but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly,<sup>[b]</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And now **faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.***

The movie *Tuesdays with Morrie*, based on the book, is the true story of a sports writer, Mitch Albom, and his reunion with a former college professor who is dying of ALS. Albom is a multitasking workaholic, whose life is a series of hurried appointments, rushed phone calls, and last-minute sprints to catch a flight. But when he discovers that his friend, Morrie Schwartz, is in the *last stages of ALS*, he honors a long-overdue promise to visit.

In these visits, Morrie teaches Mitch some *important lessons* about life.

On one occasion, Morrie is very frail, and is lying in a recliner in pain. He grimaces and asks Mitch to rub his feet. "When we're infants," says Morrie, "we need people to survive; when we're dying, we need people to survive; but here's the secret: *in between, we need each other even more.*"

Mitch nods and responds with a quote that he has heard Morrie say many times. "*We must love one another or die.*"

Morrie loses patience with Mitch.

"Yeah, but do you *believe* that? Does it *apply to you?*"

"I just don't understand it," says Mitch.

It's a very simple lesson", says Morrie, "*We must love one another or die,*"

Tuesdays with Morrie (Touchstone, 1999), based on the book Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom;

That's what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is *essential*.

Love is what *life* is all about.

When we come to the end of our lives, love is what really matters.

The *victims of 9/11* didn't make final phone calls to say,

I hate you, or you hurt me.

They left messages of love.

Love is the main thing *on our minds* when we look back over our lives.

Because love *gives meaning* to our existence.

*Kids* are often able to see love when we can't.

Listen to some kids' answers, when asked, *What is love?*

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her *toenails* anymore. So my *grandfather* does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

"When someone loves you, the way they *say your name* is different...."

"Love is when someone hurts you, and you get so mad, but you *don't yell* at them because you know it would hurt their feelings."

"Love is what's *in the room with you at Christmas* if you stop opening presents and listen."

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man *who are still friends* even after they know each other so well."

"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should *say it a lot. Because people forget.*" What Is Love—From a Kid's Point of View, LightSinger, (3-14-02);

When and where have *you seen REAL love?* What does it *mean* to you?

According to God,

Love is what we were *created to be, and do.*

Our purpose in life-- is to *love* the way God loves us.

Pastor Edward Markquart, of Seattle Grace Lutheran, said:.

*God commands us to love one another....but... It is like God commanding **fish** to swim. .. **birds** to fly. .. **daffodils** to be beautiful. When God commands us to love as God loves, God is simply commanding us to be the kind of people that **we were created** to be in the first place.*

We were created for love,  
But in reality, it's *not something that comes naturally* to us.

These words from 1 Corinthians 13  
are familiar to most of us through *weddings*.  
But they *were NOT intended* for couples getting married.  
Not at all.

They were written to a *community* in Corinth  
who were fighting, arguing, trying to prove who was right,  
who was better...

They were a church full of conflict, competition, and division.  
These people were driving each other crazy,  
and Paul writes to remind them of their *purpose*.  
To *love* one another.

But in order to love one another like God does---we need a lot of help from God!  
Real love *comes from God*---and *flows through us*.  
And it requires our *effort, and energy*.  
Loving like this, in 1 Corinthians 13, takes *maturity*.

Pastor Kevin Armstrong said,  
*.. the **grown-up Christian** recognizes that marriages and friendships and relationships and church communities bring together all kinds of different people with different gifts and different ideas. And, as wonderful as it is, sometimes that all just sort of drives us **crazy**. And we are reminded once again: Love is patient. Love is kind. ....Kevin R. Armstrong, "Cultivating Attentiveness", Faith and Leadership.com*

The question is: *Are we grown up* Christians?  
Do we love, despite the fact that people drive us crazy?  
Are we *mature* in our love?

I wonder—how has your *idea of love changed* over the years of your life?  
 When we are *little*,  
 Love is all about me, what makes me happy, what I will get from others.

As we grow up, love ideally evolves, doesn't it?  
 Do you remember your idea of love changing over time?  
 And *how do you view love today?*

The apostle Paul reminds us that although Jesus tells us  
 to be child-like in faith, we are *not to be child-ish* in love.  
 Real love takes maturity.  
 It means getting beyond ourselves, and beyond our feelings.  
 Real love says I *hear* you, and I'm *here* for you.  
 It's not about self.  
 It's about *giving of self*.

Real love is a **VERB**, a *way* to live.  
 It's *deeper than any emotion*,  
 And *extends* far beyond ourselves.

This is why Paul says that we are *called to love like adults*...  
 and put an end to childish ways.

Real, mature love loves even the people who are **HARD to love**.  
 Now, that's difficult for most of us.  
 In fact, Paul would say we can't do it alone.  
**We need God's help.**

And then, Like Nike's old motto,  
**We Just Do It.**  
 Even when we don't feel love—We just *do* it.  
 That's mature love —**JUST LOVING.**

**C.S. Lewis** once famously wrote in *Mere Christianity*,  
**“Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor;  
 ACT AS IF you did.**  
**As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets.**  
**When you are behaving as if you loved someone,**  
**you will presently come to love [them].”**

Real love is mature like that,  
 It is self-giving,  
 and all of our love is just a *foretaste* of the love of God  
 that we will experience in heaven. That's what Paul means when he says....  
*. 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.*

So--*how do we live a life of love?*

The *best* place to *find* the way is in a person---*Jesus*.  
 The best way to know love, is through a *relationship* with Him.

We need to understand God's love for us,  
 So we can love others the same way.  
 Then, we're not conjuring up our own feelings or actions,  
 we are loving—*because we ARE loved*.  
 It *flows* through us.

This kind of *agape love* is what makes a true community  
 of people called the *body of Christ*, the church.

*Agape love* is what Paul describes here in 1 Corinthians.  
*English has ONE word for all kinds of Love—*  
 we love pizza, we love our families.  
 Same word.

In Greek, there are **SIX different words for love**--romantic, self, brotherly,  
 playful, long-standing....  
 and **agape** is the *ultimate, radical, unconditional love*.  
 It is God's love for us, and the love we are called to give.

You know, there's a reason Jesus commanded us  
 to *love one another AS He loves us*.  
 It's because love, or the lack thereof,  
 is the *most powerful FORCE* in the whole world.

William Barclay once said: *More people have been brought into the church by the kindness of real Christian LOVE than by all the theological arguments in the world, and more people have been driven from the church by the hardness and ugliness of so-called Christianity than by all the doubts in the world.* William Barclay, Leadership, Vol. 9, no. 3.

Isn't that true?

Love is the most powerful force, and our most powerful calling.  
 Jesus said it best: They will *know we are Christians* by our *LOVE*.

We can *know and experience* agape love--in our families of faith,  
 and in our relationships,  
 By the grace and gift of God.

We've all seen *glimpses* of such love in our own lives.  
*where you have witnessed* it?

I've seen it in my family—When my mom took care of Dad for 13 years...  
 It's the love I see *between so many of you*.  
 Caring for one another through conversation, calls, visits, food, and prayers.

Love is what we need to *nurture* in church.  
 It's what we need to *teach* our children.  
 It's what we need to *encourage*—more than anything else.  
 It's something our *world so desperately needs* today.  
 To know we are Christians by *our LOVE*.

*How can you show that love?*

Today, in your bulletin you will find a *post-it note*.  
*If you're online, maybe you have one at home, or just a small piece of paper*.  
 I want you to write something loving—to someone this week.  
 A word or phrase of encouragement, or appreciation.  
 Or a Bible verse about love.

Everyone I know could use a loving word from someone else.  
 We all need to be reminded that *we are loved*.  
 And that we are *instruments* of God's love.

Friends, hear the *Good News* of the Gospel for you today:  
 We are *loved*, so that we might *love one another*.  
 This is the way people know we are Christians.  
 And for that, all God's people say together,  
 Amen.