

### **1Corinthians 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. 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. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 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. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 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. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

## Sermon

It is the end of the summer. My children have headed back to school, we will be heading back into our sanctuary for weekly worship next week and our normal schedules will begin to take root again, bringing a sense of pattern and consistency to our lives. But it has been a wonderful summer. I have had opportunities to travel to the Appalachian Mountains and the Rocky Mountains. I've been to the beach and I've relaxed on my own back deck. And what summer would be complete without a wedding or two, plus the celebration of my own anniversary.

In 2000 and 2001, while my wife and I were planning our wedding, it struck me that I wasn't too familiar with scripture texts that had to do with weddings. I grew up hearing all the wonderful stories of the Old Testament and of what Jesus did. But for some reason, we didn't spend much time talking about weddings in our Sunday School. So I did what we do now-a-days and I went online and looked up wedding scriptures. And there I found, among a handful of other good texts, the perfect text, the one we had to have; 1Corinthians 13. I remember thinking how smart and unique I was in finding this text, that is until I became a pastor and realized that 2 out of every 3 weddings have found this unique passage that was also perfect for their wedding.

It dawns on me, that maybe because pastors encounter this text frequently at weddings, we don't often talk about 1Corinthians 13 on Sunday mornings. But there are wonderful things within this text that reach far beyond the relationship of marriage and deserve some time this morning.

The first thing to recognize about this text is that it is settled in the midst of a large conversation that Paul is having about spiritual gifts and the Body of Christ. Right at the beginning Paul makes clear that love is the core gift that we all must have, and without love the other gifts are not what they are supposed to be. Speaking in tongues, prophecy, generosity, faith, all of these require love to be at our center and love to be what moves us into all other spiritual gifts.

But this summer has been hard to have love at our center. There has been a lot in the news and in our lives that has pushed us to have more fear, more anxiety, more sadness, and even more anger and hatred. We have watched reports of senseless violence within our own country and abroad. We have struggled with grief and with the challenges of failing health. There have been difficult transitions in life and difficult memories that have caused us to lose our hope and faith and our love. This summer has been filled with voices that point us to how we should fear one another: we should fear police, we should fear people of other races, we should fear refugees that might be terrorist, we should fear people with guns, we should fear people of other faiths, we should fear people of other political parties. Distrust, anxiety, death, pain. It has been a difficult summer of many of us. But Paul reminds us that as followers of Jesus, we are called to have love at the core of our hearts, not fear or anxiety. So I want you to take out your bubbles and join me in a moment of therapy. Think about what your most your biggest fears, anxieties, angers or frustrations. Think about it and think about how it has

grabbed ahold of your life and held you captive. Anxiety and fear have a tendency to cause us to hold our breath but today I want you to breath out your concerns and fears. I want you to blow bubbles and then watch them float away. Blow away the concerns that you have no power to control. Blow away the fears and anxieties and rest them in the arms of our savior.

Paul is clear about what must be at our core, what must be at the center of every disciple: love. And what does love look like? "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." Too often we have regulated these words to marriage only. But love is more than something we share between husband and wife and it is more than just an emotion saved for family and close friends. No, the love that Paul speaks about as the greatest of spiritual gifts is a love that is exhibited to the world. To those that we know and to the new person at work. To those that we call friends and to those whom we meet for a few moments in the midst of our day. Love is for our neighbors that know by face and name, and for those neighbors that are strangers to us.

I love that Paul talks about putting away childish things while I invite you to blow bubbles, but I think there is something important about seeing the ways that what we breath into the world is real and can make a difference. Paul ends by saying that faith, hope, and love endure, that these three gifts are the ones that you can take with you, that last for eternity. And Paul is asking all those who would follow Jesus Christ, to seek the greater gifts, those gifts that will last, those gifts that lay a foundation of peace and justice for all people. So take your bubbles once again, and this time I want you to breath out your faith, your believe that God's good news is for everyone and that Christ came so that we might know God through him. I want you to breath out your hope, hope in a God's who is working for reconciliation and unity, for a new day together and for a life abundant. I want you to breath out your love, the love that you have received in Christ, the love that you have to share with others, the love that calls you to be patient and kind and to bear all things and endure through all things. I want you to breath out a love that never ends. Fill the world with hope, and faith, and love. And make room for God to fill up your heart as well. Thanks be to God, the giver of the greatest of gifts, love. Amen