

Sermon Notes



Series: Love Letters

Sermon: Dear Church, You Can't Stay Here

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. 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 only 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.

Monday: Read John 3:16-17

What does the word *love* mean to you? How do you use it in your everyday conversations? Often the English language doesn't do it justice; *love*, and all of its varied meanings, loses something in translation from the original Hebrew and Greek of Scripture. Let's look at the Hebrew word for love — **ahava (אהבה)**, which originates from the root word, **hav (הב)**, which means to give. From its earliest roots, Jews viewed love as a verb deeply tied to sacrifice, dedication, and provision. It's love that puts others first always. The Greek language has 7 words for love, but by far the most used — **agape (ἀγάπη)**, embraces a universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstance. It goes beyond just the emotions to the extent of seeking the best for others. It refers to the covenant love of God for humans, as well as our reciprocal love for God, and extends to the

love of all humanity. This is what it means to love. Reflect on your use of the word *love* today. How can you be more intentional about saying and doing *love*?

Prayer: Lord, help us to love without condition or reservation as you have loved us. Amen.

Tuesday: Read Deuteronomy 6:4-6, Leviticus 19:18

Shema, the Hebrew word for this prayer found in Deuteronomy, is an affirmation of belief at the center of Hebrew life. These words contain the essence of the spirit of the law contained in the Torah (the first 5 books of the Old Testament). The book of Leviticus is all about living in community with others. Chapter 19 deals specifically with response to the marginalized, poor and oppressed, so, in context, the second half of verse 18 is a summation of God's call to justice. Together these 2 passages comprise Jesus' answer to the scribe who asks "Which Commandment is the first of all?" in Mark 12:29: "The first is, 'Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Jesus reminds those listening that everything hinges on these two statements of faith. In what ways do you love God? How do you love your neighbor? What about the neighbor who is different from you?

Prayer: Love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind. And love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Micah 6:8

This passage is perhaps the best known in Micah and for good reason. Many consider it one of the most important statements that God makes about the mission of humanity. In Micah, we read of a prophet who attacks the powerful for economic policies that benefit the wealthy at the expense of everyone else (Micah 2:1-7) and the false prophets who support injustice (Micah 2:6-8). In the end, Micah calls the Israelites, and us, back to what he considers the roots of salvation: justice, kindness, and faithfulness with God. We are called to set aside our own narrow self-interest and instead commit ourselves to the priorities of the Kingdom of God. God intends for us to be more than we often are, never giving up on us but always calling us forward into deeper relationship with God and with one another. What does it mean to "do justice"? What might that look like in your life? How do you "love kindness"? In what ways do you "walk humbly with God"?

Prayer: Holy God, may I always seek you with justice in my heart, kindness on my lips, and humility in my steps. Amen.

Thursday: Read 1 John 4:7-16

God is the source and the definition of love. God *is* love. God loves as the sun shines: love expresses who God is. 1 John emphasizes that God's love is not some abstract concept. It is passion expressed

in action. God made love real and present by sending Jesus and God's love is a truth more basic and reliable than the ground we walk on and the air we breathe. Such life-giving love is too wonderful to keep to ourselves. To know God's love is to overflow with God's love. How can we possibly love God while we hate God's beloved? Seeing ourselves as God's beloved means seeing our sisters and brothers as God's loved ones too. When God's unimaginable, limitless, divine love comes alive in us, we become the real presence of God in the world. All we can possibly say to such love is: thank you. Take a moment to let God's love for you well up within your soul. How will you let it overflow from you today?

Prayer: Loving God, thank you, thank you, thank you. Amen.

Friday: Read Galatians 5:13-14, 22-25

These nine fruits of the Spirit sketch such a lyric portrait of a beautiful, generous life an invitation to live a life of freedom in Christ. I'm not sure we can be scolded into being loving, peaceful, self-controlled, gentle and all the rest. But in an age when everyone seems angry, entitled, hacked-off, selfish, and filled with "me-first" strong-arm tactics to get their way, don't we long for more loving people who are kind, good, peaceable? Don't we pine to see self-control and patience and a deep-seated joy setting the tone for our interactions with each other? It matters deeply how we live into this world that belongs to God and it is this "fruit" that marks our relationships with each other as people of God. How can we bear more faithful fruit, born of the Spirit, as a church community? As individuals?

Prayer: Divine Spirit of God, grant us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Amen.

Saturday: Read Matthew 25:31-46

The reminder today is straightforward. We will encounter Jesus in the 'least of these' — in the hungry and the thirsty. In the stranger and the naked and the sick and those in prison. Oh no, our faith is not only of the mind and of the heart but is also for the hands and the feet. We live our faith in what we do. We live our faith in what we do in places that aren't always pretty. Above all else, this demand for love seems to be at the heart of the gospel. I have not seen any other way to be faithful to the way of Jesus, except through the attempt to love people, all people, especially the most unlovable. We will always love people best by doing the risky work of mercy and compassion and grace, and it begins with first seeing the face of Jesus in another. Where have you seen the face of Jesus this week? Where might you see Jesus today? Where will you look for Jesus tomorrow? How will you love Jesus?

Prayer: May I always remember to love the Christ in my brother and sister with mercy and compassion and grace. Amen.