

LIFE TOGETHER IN CHRIST
FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

1 COR 12:31b-13:13
JAN 31, 2016

³¹ And I will show you a still more excellent way.^{13:1} If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² 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 have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

You have probably heard the slogan:

“Love, it’s what makes a Subaru and Subaru”

I have no idea what that is supposed to mean.

But text suggests love is what makes a Christian a Christian
and today we could say it is what makes a Lutheran school
a Lutheran school.

Paul connects love to faith and hope.

These three are commonly associated in Bible, for example:

HEB 10:22ff let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

GAL 5:5f. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

So it is obvious, faith and hope are not unimportant.

In fact, they are essential.

It is only through faith in Jesus that we are saved
and made spiritually alive and able to love.

What is it that makes you to be you?

You can't be you without a body. But you are not just a body.

Without a living spirit you wouldn't be you.

The whole you is a living spirit together with a body.

In chapter before this, Paul talks about how we are all part of the body of Christ. Not just separate individuals

each connected to Christ by faith,

but connected to each other by connection with Christ.

Love is what connects us with others in this body.

This year's theme for Lutheran Schools Week is

"Life together in Christ."

In these verses, Paul emphasizes how our life in Christ is life *together* in Christ.

LIFE TOGETHER MUST INCLUDE SHOWING LOVE

WE ARE NOT YET ALL WE ARE MEANT TO BE

THE LOVE WE NEED COMES FROM CHRIST

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I don't think if you have ever read anything else Paul wrote that you can take this to mean he is devaluing faith.

Faith in God enabled him to do amazingly powerful things.

So I also don't think means to devalue the ability to speak.

He himself depended on great God-given ability to speak in languages of men & angels

And he is not devaluing his knowledge and understanding and prophetic ability to apply it to a specific situation.

Nor are we to devalue knowledge and understanding.

It is because this is so important we go to the effort to have children in a Christian school.

This takes great sacrifices, and I don't think

Paul means to devalue importance of these sacrifices.

He himself gave up much and put his life a great risk for the sake of his ministry to others.

So, it is appropriate that during Lutheran Schools Week
children of our school showed knowledge in a quiz bowl,
sang with angelic voices at assisted living homes,
were built up in faith in chapel
and packed food to give away to the poor & starving.
then at the end of the week they went & had fun together.
The connection which motivated and shined through
each of these things was love for Christ and so for others.
Picture it this way, If I want to go somewhere
and have a fancy sports car, motorcycle, SUV, RV, & ATV,
but no gas, I have nothing,
What motivates all, that is, gives power and makes it go?
If I want to enjoy summer day and have
nice boat, waterskis, big tubes, jetski, pontoon boat,
but no water, I have nothing. What is it all for?
If I want house and have 2x4s, sheets of plywood, shingles,
siding, windows, plumbing and electrical fixtures,
but if I have no nails, I have nothing.
What holds it all together?
If I want to eat or feed other hungry people and have meat
and potatoes and eggs and flour, but no heat to cook it,
I have nothing, what makes it all edible?
Love is essential in the Christian life, especially life together.
It is at the heart of what we do and teach in our school
because love is what motivates us, is reason for what we do,
what connects everything together & makes it worthwhile.
Without love we would just be showing off for own benefit
and wasting our time - which is all too easy to do.
So, if love is so important to us, are we saying that
we are the most loving? Unfortunately not.

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tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we
know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes,
the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I
thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I
gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then
face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I
have been fully known.

Because Christ has already died for us and risen again,

& baptism has already buried us with him & raises to new life
as we live in repentance each day,
we are to live as if the last day has already come for us,
fully reflecting what Christ is like, knowing everything,
but with glorious love drowning out everything else
and shining out through all of us in the church & school.

Is this what we are like? Not yet.

Paul's point here is that spiritually we are still little children.
When we look in the mirror now, the reflection of Christ we see
is still quite dim and clouded.

Love is patient and kind. We are only kind of good,
so we need a lot of patience with each other
and too easily become frustrated and crabby.

Love does not envy what God gives others
or boast as if what we have is not God's gift.

Love is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist
on its own way but considers others.

We, instead of looking at Christ and reflecting him
to others, too easily look at only our own interests.

So we act jealous, speak in rude, mean ways.

Love is not irritable or resentful.

It looks at everything in the kindest light.

It does not snicker when bad happens
but celebrates what is true and good.

But we are too easily offended, ready to blame others.

Even when good things shine on others,
we imagine their shadow falling on us.

Love bears all, believes all, hopes all, endures all.

This does not mean love is blind and just
carelessly goes along with everything
but that it does not give up and, because of Christ,
holds on to faith and hope no matter what.

Our love, however, too easily goes to other extremes,
too quickly gives in, too easily smothers, has hurt feelings,
and so becomes counter productive,
like gas that instead of empowering, explodes
water that instead of floating a boat, gets in and sinks it.
nails that instead of holding wood together, splinter it,
or heat that instead of cooking food, burns it.

Our love, like our knowledge, is still in part.

This is why, as God's children, we are all still in school.

This partial will only pass away when the perfect comes,
and the perfect does come and has come in Christ.

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But it is not our love that saves us. It is Christ's love.

This is love, not that we loved him but that he loved us
and gave his life up for us.

v. 4-7 speaks of what love does as if it were a person.

Who is that person? It is not you or I but Jesus.

Jesus does not envy or boast or be arrogant or rude.

Instead he humbled himself, putting aside his rightful glory
to take on our weakness and shame.

Jesus is patient and kind, not irritable or resentful.

He keeps on forgiving us over and over
and lifting us when we continue to fall down.

He does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the truth.

When we suffer from what we do wrong,
he does not gloat that we are getting what we deserve
but he throws a party for us whenever we repent.

Jesus is the one who could move mountains
as well as cast out demons and heal the sick
and remove the mountain of our sin from on top of us.

Jesus is the one who gave up all he had for the poor,
including giving up his own body out of love
and did gain something, redemption of the whole world.

Jesus is the one with all wisdom and knowledge
who knows us through and through and so reveals to us
our imperfections and God's perfect love
and his perfect plan for our salvation.

Jesus is the one who knows all the languages of men & angels,
and has become the word made flesh to speak to our hearts
about God's love and truth for us,
all of which he shares with us in his word, the Bible.

So, how do we share love and teach love & practice love
in our lives and in our school?

Not by saying, you should be more loving,
or by saying look at me and how loving I am,
but by pointing to Jesus as he shows his face in scripture.
The more fully we see him and know him & his love,
the more we will reflect that love.

LIFE TOGETHER MUST INCLUDE SHOWING LOVE

Love is our motivation, our purpose, and what
binds us together in the body of Christ.

WE ARE NOT YET ALL WE ARE MEANT TO BE

Even when we are grown up, we are all still
little children of God who need to keep putting behind us
our childish ways that interfere with love.

Our lives here are only dim reflections of God's face,
but we continue learning because...

THE LOVE WE NEED COMES FROM CHRIST

who gave up all and endured all in order to keep giving to all
his perfect love now and until
everything partial passes away.