God’s Word to us through Peter’s pen in our Epistle is rather interesting. It appears to be very “law” oriented, telling us what we should do in our Christian life. These are things that we are to be doing as Christians – not optional. We are to be “loving one another earnestly.”

**Love Covers A Multitude of Sins**

**1 Peter 4:7-14**

Exaudi – 6th Sunday of Easter

05.16.2021

As I have explained before, there are numerous Greek words which we translate into English as ‘love.’ The particular word for love used here – as in other places – is a selfless, self-sacrificing, love. This love is not a feeling in the heart. It is a living action to do for others. It is a love that thinks of others above and beyond self, maybe even sacrificing of self. This love is best seen in the love of God which we see in Christ!

It is my plan to take this time today to consider that love, especially as used in that first paragraph of our Epistle lesson. *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

We are to be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of our prayers – and those prayer are, above all, to be in earnest love for one another. We are to be fit to pray for not only ourselves, but for others. If you cannot curb your fleshly desires, then you will also be unable to control your anger with others. If you are unable to control your anger with others, you will be unable to forgive them. You are to love them! You are, by an act of your will, to do for others – selflessly.

There is a list of things here you are to do for others: Pray for them – earnestly! Do you pray for others with a fervent desire in your heart? Do you pray for those who may not have treated you well?

Show hospitality to others, without grumbling – when you see a need in the lives of other, provide for them, and do so without complaint, without grudging the expense. “For whom should I do that,” you ask?

Your neighbor!

And your curiosity asks, “Who is my neighbor?”

All those who share your human flesh, those in the image of God!

“How much do I have to give,” you wonder?

Simple questions answer that. How much of what you have is ***NOT*** God’s gift to you? How much is yours by your work alone, not provided to you by God’s gracious goodness?

Our Epistle lesson tells us that what we have is not ours, but God’s gracious gift by which we are to serve one another. It says, *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.*

As each has received a gift, use it in service to others. When we serve our neighbor, God is glorified. Our service of our neighbor declares to others that the love of God in Christ Jesus constrains and moves us to love as God has loved us.

But it is hard to love others when they treat us poorly. How should we speak of those who speak ill of us? I know what I would like to say about, and to, those who speak ill of me. It is not a response of love that springs quickly to mind. Too often the golden rule is perverted, “I’m going to do to others just as they have done to me.”

But God’s command is that we are to keep loving one another – and we are to do it earnestly. That word earnestly is special, it means “without failing.” We are to love without failing.

Maybe you are better at that than I am, but on my ***BEST*** days there are a multitude of failings to love others. Personally though, it isn’t my fault, they made me to fail at love. I wanted to but… (bow head, shake head, speak slowly) OK, let us be honest. You know the trick, don’t you? When you point one finger at someone else there are three more pointing back at you. That is so true.

No matter what anybody does to us, we have a choice as to how we respond. When we are not treated well, the visceral, gut response, the response from deep within – from our heart – it is not loving. That is also why we don’t begin our prayers in our heart, for from out own hearts come the vile evils, just as Jesus declares, “What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.” (Matt. 15:18,19)

What we are to do is what Jesus did from the cross, keep loving one another earnestly, for love covers a multitude of sins, yes indeed, it covers all sins. You remember His words, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”

But I cannot forgive, and I certainly cannot love, Herman Herpolsheimer.

You are right, ***YOU*** cannot! Christ already has! And you are in Christ. Do not do it yourself! Live in the love of Christ to you and in you. His love on the cross covered not only the multitude of your sins, but all of them. On the cross, Christ was loving you earnestly – unfailingly.

His love for all those who persecuted Him was given unto death as payment for their persecution. His perfect love for us who fail to love was given as the atoning sacrifice for us who fail to love. His love covers a multitude of sins.

Christ prayed for ***YOU*** on the cross – Father, forgive them. Christ continues to intercede before the Father on your behalf, even today, “Father, forgive them. Our Spirit has brought them into our house to receive this gracious gift of our love! Father, forgive them!” His Word of love covers a multitude of our sins.

Christ showers upon us His hospitality. Not only does He provide for all our needs of this life, our daily bread; giving clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse, children, land, animals, and all we have. He richly and daily provides us with all we need to support this body and life. Even when we do not appreciate it and grumble that it is not fully to our liking, He still gives it to us.

And today He is the most gracious host. In perfect hospitality He sets the table before us with the greatest meal, the most healthy, life-giving meal of His body and blood. His love sacrificed upon the cross He embodies in the bread that we eat. His self-less love, shed in His precious blood, fills the cup of which we drink. At His table He fills us with Himself, His love. His meal of love covers a multitude of our sins.

Only in the receiving of these gracious gifts of God in Christ Jesus, as His love covers all our sins, can we lovingly serve one another. God’s grace comes to us in Christ Jesus, and in that grace, we live, and move, and have our being.

It is only in these gracious gifts of God’s love in Christ Jesus that we are strengthened – by God – to serve one another. We are stewards of the love of God in Christ Jesus. As this love of God constrains us to forgive and love, there is no way we can take credit for it, it is only as God does this in us and through us, that we love and forgive.

We go out from this place in the love of Christ. It is this strength that God supplies that we live our lives in loving service to one another. In this way, God is glorified through Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God who has made us stewards of His grace! His love covers a multitude of sins in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.