

Simple Love

1 Corinthians 13

Introduction

- A Public Service Announcement
 - The most important thing I'm going to say today, especially if you are a male who is married or dating, it is 5 days until Valentine's Day!
 - Remembering this public service announcement will save you lots of heartache, shame, and other negative consequences associated with not adhering to this public service announcement.
 - I may or may not know this from personal experience.
- History of Valentine's Day
 - One of those holidays that we are told is important if we are in a relationship, we adhere to the "rules" or "expectations" of the holiday.
 - But who came up with this idea anyway?
 - The Hallmark Channel
 - A lonely woman longing for the love of her life?
 - Teenagers lost in a romantic muse?
 - At least two historical theories that are also tied to legend
 - A martyred bishop, later referred to as St. Valentine
 - A Christian holiday that was enacted to replace a pagan fertility ritual.
 - Whatever the origins of this holiday, the tale has spun for centuries.
 - Tales that are spun become legend that then become traditions and later become customs
 - If you are smart, you take something like Valentine's Day and you find a way to market it so that you can make a lot of money!
 - And so, here we are 5 days away from Valentine's Day.
 - You have received this public announcement, free of charge, from the courtesy of your pastor.
 - You can't blame the pastor for not reminding you
 - I wish you the best of luck!
- It should not surprise you that *Love* has its roots in the Bible
 - In fact, as we discovered last week, *Love* is the foundation of our faith
 - Two greatest commandments: Love God, Love Others (Matthew 22:37-38)
 - Remember **Matthew 22:40 (ESV)**, "**On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.**"
- Sermon Series: "Keep It Simple"- Simple Love
 - As you prepare for Valentine's Day, you may be thinking, "Yeah, let's keep it simple!"
 - When you boil everything down *love* really is simple, but ask anyone who has been married any length of time and they will tell you that *love* is not as simple as when they first met.
 - Love, at times, can be complicated, especially when the warm and fuzzy feeling of love is not as cozy as what you once remembered it to be.

- This truth is not just isolated to romantic relationships, but to any relationship (parent, child, friend, etc.) that requires attention.
- For all the truth that is contained in the Bible, there is one simple fact: God is Love and God Loves You.
- Question for us: What does this simple fact require of us?
 - Not related to what we need to do to earn it
 - But, how should we respond as a result of God's love for us?
 - What is love?

The Vanity of Love

- **1 Corinthians 13**
 - Often read at weddings and certainly has plenty of important things to say within the chapter, however what may be more significant is the context in which the Apostle Paul is speaking
 - **1 Corinthians 1:10-11 (ESV), "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers."**
 - A church community that shared the same faith, but were split by the divisions among them.
 - While the Apostle Paul's an assortment of necessary instructions regarding the divisions within the church, the most important instruction comes from 1 Corinthians 13.
 - At the end of the day, at the end of all their divisions, comes the call to simply love one another.
- **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**
 - You can do a lot of good things, but without love, you are nothing and gain nothing.
 - Maybe you have heard: Find something that you love to do and you will never work a day in your life.
 - It doesn't mean that there is an absence of work, or that work is not necessary
 - Instead it refers to the joy and satisfaction of doing something that has greater purpose and meaning for you life.
 - It's pretty easy to tell whether someone loves what they do or not
 - Waitress
 - A doctor or nurse
 - A Christian, **"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35, ESV)."**
- The Vanity of Love
 - A love that doesn't last
 - A love that doesn't last, or is conditional is really a vain love
 - In other words, conditional love is not really love at all
 - The example of Solomon, the Book of Ecclesiastes
 - Great achievements

- Great riches
- Numerous wives
- Yet, in reflection, his heart was turned from God and the meaning of everything was lost in vain
- When you read the first two chapters of Ecclesiastes there is an absence of God, but the turn of Ecclesiastes happens in chapter 3 when Solomon realizes that all is vain with the absence of God.
- Love is vain if God is absent
 - Find something you love and you will never work a day in your life.
 - The truth is that love is work. Love is hard work. But love that is rooted in God is motivated by more than just emotion.
 - Love is often associated with an emotion. What happens when that feeling is absent?
 - The Righteous Brothers, “*You’ve Lost that Lovin’ Feeling*”
 - Now it’s gone...
 - **Romans 5:6, 8 (ESV), “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**
 - Love may not always be an emotion, but love is always a choice.
- A love not rooted in God can easily become a vain love.

Love is not about us

- **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**
 - The heart of Paul’s message is this: *Love* does not insist on its own way.
 - When love becomes about what we want, then love is conditional and love is reduced to an emotion.
 - In fact, love that is based on what we want is what makes love complicated
- Popular message: “Can’t we all just love each other”
 - It sounds simple and in reality it is very simple
 - What makes it complicated is that love is often insistent on its own way
 - **Romans 1:24-25 (ESV), “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.”**
 - The reason we just can’t love each other is because of our sin
 - This was the issue in the church in Corinth
 - Sin is the opposite of love
 - Sin is about us; What we get wrong about love is that love is not about us
- Problem with Christians: “Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner”
 - We don’t truly love the sinner, because we often don’t deal with our own sin
 - We get offended by sin, which we should, but we react in hate, not love
 - Our love cannot become conditional based on the sin, which in fact is often the way we love even as Christians.

- God's love requires us to love the sinner unconditionally, because God loves us despite our sin and continues to reach out to us
- I love my wife and kids, but I don't always respond in loving ways
 - Problem is that my actions and the love I have do not always match
 - I believe what God is calling the church in Corinth and all of us to is to return to the core of who we are called to be.
 - Sin, in all of us, divorces us from the love that God requires of us
 - Recognize that our actions don't always match the love we are called to
 - The Challenge: Quit making love about you! Make love about the Savior who died for your sins even while you were a sinner and will continue to love you and the world until the very End!
 - It's the love that Christ showed on the cross that led us to love God, and it is the love that you show to a sinful world that will lead others to God.

Love is a Calling

- **1 Corinthians 13:8-13**
 - Take a picture of yourself from when you were 18, how many people would recognize you?
 - You probably look different, but that picture probably says more to you than just what can be seen by the eye
 - You may see an 18 year old preparing for adulthood
 - Challenges
 - Opportunities
 - College
 - New Family
 - Job
 - While we might focus on the color of our hair, the lack of wrinkles, etc. that comes with age, as we look at who we are today we should see a quality that has grown within us: maturity.
 - As we continue to grow in age, hopefully are continuing to age at least in one positive way: "I gave up childish ways."
- Love is a calling
 - We grow in that calling the more and more that we look into the face of God
 - When we look into the face of God what do we see?
 - Humility
 - Sacrifice
 - Grace
 - Holiness
- Conversation with a person who was struggling this week
 - I knew this person was struggling, so I sent them an email and asked if I could follow up with a phone call
 - The person sent me a long text, in response, explaining the struggle they were dealing with

- To really deal with this struggle required more than just a text. There needed to be a physical interaction.
- We can get into this whole discussion about how texting and Facebook have hindered our ability to communicate adequately, but here's my point: We often text with God instead of having a face to face interaction with God.
- Texting allows for distance.
 - We pray and all we do is talk
 - We come to church, but don't read our Bible
 - We Amen, but never take the time to self-examine
 - Instead of growing, we remain a child in our faith
- BUT, if we really answered the call to love, to be the disciple that God calls us to be, the core of who we really are
 - We would pick up the phone, stare God in the face, and encounter the Truth
 - Real love begins when we answer the call to pick up the cross and follow Christ

Conclusion

- Do you have a vain love or a real love?
 - Real love does not insist on its own way
 - The love we are called to is more than an emotion, but a choice.
- N.T. Wright suggestion¹- Reflect on these 3 things:
 - Ways in which we see this quality (of love) in Jesus
 - Ways in which we see (or don't see) this love in ourselves
 - Ways in which, if we were like Jesus, this love would work out in our lives

¹ N.T. Wright. *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. Pg. 174.