THE TRIGGER

This is a Sermon by Rev. Dr. Ted Rust.
It is based on Romans 12:9-21, John 15:12, 1 Cor. 13:4-8.

A married couple drove down a beautiful country road for several miles, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an argument and neither of them wanted to concede their position. They passed a barnyard full of mules, goats, and pigs and the husband asked sarcastically, "**Are those relatives of yours**?" The wife replied, "**Yes indeed. They are my in-laws."**

Today, I want to talk about love. Romans 12:9-10 says:
"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection."

Helen Johnson lives in Tarrant, Alabama. **She was caught stealing at store.** The police were called to arrest her. When the police officer arrived at the scene he asked her what she stole. She said: "**I took 5 eggs to feed my hungry children."**

The police officer took her to a supermarket and bought her groceries to feed herself and her children. Helen cried tears of thankfulness in response to his genuine love. **The Policeman did not arrest her.** He felt compassion for her. He shared God's love with her.

Here is another translation of Romans 12:9-10.
"Don't just pretend you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong in the world right now. Stand on the side of the good."

In life there are mountains and valleys. There are uncertain times and times of great excitement, but nothing can bring more joy to life than building fulfilling relationships. The keys to healthy relationships includes such things as:

- Common faith in God,
- Communication,
- Patience,
- Loyalty,
- Shared goals,
- Fun,
- Hope,
- And most of all love.

In the Holy Scriptures love is the greatest gift. God loves us and we in turn love God and others. Loving God and loving others is the most important thing about the Christian life. Real Christians show real love to God and to all others. One Theologian (Debashish Mridha) puts it this way: "**The more you love others, the more beautiful your life becomes."**

Mother Teresa says:
"Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love."

Most of us have learned how to be courteous to others—how to speak kindly, avoid hurting their feelings and appear to take an interest in people. We may even be skilled in pretending to show

compassion when we hear of others' needs, or to become indignant when we learn of injustice. We know that God calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond being hypocritical and polite. Sincere love requires concentration and effort.

Real love means helping others become better people. The "**genuine love**" Romans chapter 12 mentions demands our time, money, and personal involvement.
No one person has the capacity to express love to a whole Church or Community, but the body of Christ in your area can. Look for people who need your love. Look for ways you and your fellow believers can love your community in Christ.

Recently a member of our Church named Eleanor turned 90 years old. This is a major milestone for anyone, but because of the Corona virus none of her 3 children could be with her in person on her birthday. It looked like it was going to be a sad birthday for Eleanor, but listen to the rest of the story.

Our Church President's name is Barbara and she had compassion for this lady. President Barbara wanted to do something special for her and went into action. **She informed the entire Church about Eleanor's situation and instead of just receiving her usual 8 or 10 cards Eleanor received over 75 cards.** Eleanor drove her car to our "Drive-through" Holy Communion ministry the next day and she was **beaming**. She told me the whole story of how her church family showed her love that was genuine by showering her with more birthday cards than she had ever received before. Romans 12:10 says: "**Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor**." It was great how our Church Members loved and honored Eleanor on her 90th birthday.

Friends, we can honor others in one of two ways. (1) First way of honoring others involves "**ulterior**" motives.

- We honor our bosses so they will reward us.
- Bosses honor their employees so that they will work harder.
- We honor the wealthy so they will contribute to our cause.
- We honor the powerful so that they will use their power for us. You can see that the first way of honoring is all about "**ulterior**" motives. This isn't love-it's a deal.
- The second way of "honoring" is God's way. (2) **God's way of showing honor involves love. There is no "ulterior" motive or tricks. It is pure love and honor.**
- We Christians honor others because they are created in God's image.
- Christians honor others because we are all sisters and brothers in Christ.
- We honor others because they have a unique and valuable contribution to make Christ's Church and world a better place.
- We honor and love others because Christ honors and loves us. He died for us. He opens the way to eternal life for us.
- Put others first! Don't love or honor others for your own benefit.

Jesus says this in John 15:12:
"**This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**"

The Bible says we are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways to practice sacrificial love. Some of these include:

- Listening
- Helping
- Encouraging
- Giving
- Being positive and having a good attitude. Too many today are negative or only focus on bad news and suffering.
- Crying with someone or celebrating with someone.

Think of someone in your family or Church who needs this kind of love and honor today. Give all the love you can, and then try to give a little more.
Former President Jimmy Carter once said: "**I have one life and one chance to make it count for something. My faith demands this—it is not optional—that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, whenever I can, for as long as I can, with whatever I have—to try and make a difference."**

Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

"**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; Love does not rejoice in wrong doing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never ends."**

In 1976 I fell 50 feet while painting bridges for the Ohio Turnpike Commission. God's love and the love of my family, friends, and Church saved my life as I recovered from a broken back, broken foot and bleeding kidneys. In my long recovery process I had goal of walking first and then eventually running. I had a dream of running in the 26 mile Boston Marathon someday. For the next 15 years I ran many marathons and finished them, but failed to run fast enough to qualify for Boston. Finally, in 1990 I qualified for the Boston Marathon. In April of 199l I ran in the Boston Marathon finishing in the top 10%.

My wonderful father Harold was serving as a Lutheran Pastor in Florida in 1991, but he took a week off and got on a plane and met me in Boston. He wanted to watch the first Rust run in this famous race. After the race we spent 3 days together visiting all the famous historic sights of Boston. We had the time of our lives – a foretaste of heaven.

When I told him how grateful I was that he took the time and made the effort to watch me run this is what he said. "**Ted, I missed most of your races when you ran in High School and in College because of my work, but I wasn't going to miss this one. I love you son. I'm proud of you."**
Now that I have 4 children of my own I can understand what a thrill it must have been for him to watch his once crippled son recover, train for 15 years, fail for 15 years, but then on an April Monday finish that famous race.

Friends - - running in the Boston Marathon was not hard. It was easy. In many ways it was a reward. What was hard was failing to qualify for 15 years and not quitting!!!! When you believe in something or someone you don't quit! Don't quit believing in God or His Church. You are loved. We need you.

You are running a famous race too. The race you are running is more important than the Boston Marathon. You are running in the race of life. You are running in the race of faith. You have a mighty church and cloud of witnesses cheering you on as you ran your race, as you love God, and as you love and serve all colors of people and all kinds of people! Hebrews 12:1-2 says: "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus."

Friend – you trigger the miracles of God when you love and honor others. During a time of unprecedented hate and dishonor you will run your race of faith with by loving and honoring all persons – red or yellow, black or white – it doesn't matter. Yes, we trigger the miracles of God when we look for new and better ways to love God and love our precious neighbors

This Sermon is very hard for me to deliver today for one very obvious reason. For the past 5 months when I preach my weekly Sermon I look directly into the Camera and into the eyes of a good Christian man named Juergen Badendieck – but – not today. God called him to his eternal home earlier this week. We will all miss him. He is an easy person to love. It was a honor to work with such a fine gentleman.

Friend – you trigger the miracles of God when you make your life count for something. You trigger the miracles of God when you love and honor others with your energy and passion. It is easy to find a way to love others. The possibilities are endless.

- Watch your child or grandchild run in an important race,
- Visit a sick loved one at home,
- Send a card to a 90 year old saint,
- Visit someone who just lost their spouse,
- Buy a hungry person some groceries,
- Teach a kid how to throw a baseball or catch a fish
- Spend your last 5 months of life helping your Church put their service online
- Forgive someone who really hurt you big time,
- Kick cancer or disease in the ass,
- Tutor a child who is struggling,
- Help a neighbor rise up from a bad turn of events,
- Strive for justice, peace, and real change in our nation,
- Drive a long way or get on a plane just to share life with someone,
- Pick up the phone and call someone who may be lonely. Don't wait for others to call you – you call them.
- No games or deceit. Let love be genuine. This is the good news.
- Yes – I was excited about running in the Boston Marathon in 1991, but I am even more excited about a new date: Sunday – September 13th at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. This is the day we watch our loving and mighty God rebuild His Church! We will pull the trigger! God's love and power will flow! Amen.