

Rev. Janet Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
February 13, 2022
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13

Sermon: With Love

There are many ways to close a letter or card that you have written to someone. You can end it with “Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Regards, Yours truly, Yours sincerely, Best regards, Cordially, Cordially yours, Yours respectfully, Respectfully, Warm regards, Best wishes, With appreciation, Best, Kind regards, Many thanks, Warmly, Yours faithfully, Yours truly, Your friend, Blessings, In Christ, Praying for you, Peace and blessings, Love, With love and there are a few others I’m sure as well.

How do you sign your letters and cards? Well, it depends on who you are writing to, right? If it is a business letter you wouldn’t sign it, Love or With Love, but if you are writing to someone you love you would probably close by saying “With Love.”

The Apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 13 to remind the Corinthians what it means to love in the name of Christ because the Corinthians were rather self-indulgent about their spiritual gifts, and there wasn’t a lot of love and encouragement being shared among the believers. Paul wanted them to realize that we are all important to the Body of Christ, and as we looked at it a few weeks ago, in Chapter 12 of Corinthians, everyone can contribute their gifts and talents.

You hear 1 Corinthians 13 read at weddings to remind the couple that a wedding is just the day, but the marriage is for a lifetime, and it helps to remember what love is and what love isn’t. Some in our congregation have been married for 50 years and over, and that is something wonderful to be able to celebrate with family and friends. Love is from the heart.

The Greeks understood that love has different meanings in different contexts. They even used different words to express those meanings. The word “**philos**” speaks to us about friendship love, like Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love. They used the word “**eros**” to describe romantic

love. There's "**storage**" love, which is the love of parents for children or family members. But Paul uses a different word for love called "**agape.**" "**Agape**" isn't based on affection or approval. This was the word that the Greek translation of the Old Testament most often used to speak of God's love. It is totally unconditional, coming as a free gift, not because the person deserves it, but because the person giving chooses to give it. It is a decision of the will to act in the other person's best interests, whether we feel like it or not.

It is like the act of getting down like a servant and washing your disciples' feet. It's being willing to lay down your life to save people who don't even care about you. It's the way God loves us, and the way God calls us to act toward others as well. Paul teaches us that love is essential to the life of the church.

A preacher and professor by the name of Dr. Haddon Robinson said, "Love is that thing which, if a church has it, it doesn't really need much else, and if it doesn't have it, whatever else it has doesn't really matter very much."

"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, as described in 1 Corinthians 13, is best understood as a way of life, lived in imitation of Jesus Christ, that is focused not on oneself but on the other around us and what is best for them.

Love is about **ACTION**, and how a person lives for the Lord and obeys him and how a person serves in the Name of the Lord.

Love is about **BEING**. This is because its foundation is in God who is love, and in Christ who shows that love. Paul says in Ephesians that Christians should be "rooted and grounded in love." Paul prays that believers will become more and more like Christ daily. Love guides our outlook on life.

This love of God is countercultural to what our world is promoting. The love of God speaks against envy, pride, gluttony, lust, sloth, wrath, greed, which are known as the Seven Deadly sins.

In our society there is so much promotion of “self”— self-awareness, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-image, self-realization, also known now as the “I” generation—even our electronic devices have that name. Many in our world, and especially in developed countries, don’t understand an existence in which a person thinks of others and gives of themselves. Christ has to be the example and, in doing, turns society upside down. Christ forgives us so we shouldn’t keep a record of wrongs done to us. We also have to forgive. Love builds up and builds up the Body of Christ, so the believers have a heart for God as they serve in His Name and call upon His Name.

Romans 5:5 says, “The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” We are to follow the command to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might and to love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus even said, “Love your enemies.” Choosing to love your enemies. Much of the Bible is based on God and His love for his people and the response of love from his people.

We aren’t going to be questioned by God about our liturgy and our impressive list of programs as a church. We are going to be questioned on how much we loved others in this life.

Love is essential to the life of the church. Paul describes to us what love is and what it does.

“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.”

In other words, those who love, don’t give up on people.

Eugene Peterson’s translation of the Bible called, ***The Message***, says, “Love...puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end.”

It is a tall order for us as individuals and for us as the Body of Christ, the church, to fulfill. It is difficult sometimes to love others, but that is what we are called to do; to remain loving and faithful to the end. Those who love aren't in competition with each other; they rejoice in each other's blessings and cry with each other's pain and sorrow. We are to be patient, kind, not to envy or boast, not to be proud or rude, it is not self-seeking, not easily angered and we are not to keep a record of wrongs. We are not to delight in evil but to rejoice in the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love can be difficult to do.

This passage reminds us of how much we all fall short in loving others, but at the same time, this passage in 1 Corinthians should inspire us and challenge us to love like Christ.

In verses 8-13 Paul tells us that love is the only thing that will last forever.

“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.”

Paul is asking the Corinthians, “What is going to last? On that day when we see God face to face, what will really be important?”

Will it be our reputation or wealth or knowledge? We will be brought face to face with the truth. What is eternal versus temporary? What will last? Only three things, says Paul—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love. Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, translates this as: “Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of these is love.”

Love is **essential, effective and eternal**. All that we do needs to be motivated by love. “Agape” love is **essential** to be **effective** when serving

in the Name of Jesus. Are our actions motivated and carried out with the Love of God? Our choices, motivated by love will follow us into **eternity**. In *Romans 8*, Paul writes, ***“nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

This is our motivation to love others like God loves us. What can we do here and now to serve others ***“WITH LOVE”*** in the name of Jesus?

Remember love is an **ACTION**, not just a feeling. God created us ***WITH LOVE*** to give love and Jesus gave himself for us ***WITH LOVE***.

The love of God is **essential** to the life of a follower of Jesus. The love of God is **effective** for promoting the fruits of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. The love of God is **eternal**.

The love of God is like a love letter signed ***WITH LOVE*** to each one of us pointing us back to Jesus Christ and his sacrificial love for us that loves us into eternity.

This is the kind of love that God commands each of us to practice every day of our life.

Are you ready to do everything ***“WITH LOVE”***?