

St Martins C3 – November 28, 2021

How now shall we live – Love in the light of eternity

Sermon Summary:

Read: Romans 13:8-10

The focus of this passage is that we love each other. What does love mean in this context?

1) Love doesn't hurt other people.

When we respect those around us, we don't, steal from them, envy them or kill them. Therefore, love in this context looks like respecting people and their property.

2) Love honours God and His ways.

We live in a world that increasingly bases its definition of love on what it feels like the loving thing to do is. But what feels like love and what love actually is, can be very different things.

3) Love is kind – (1 Cor 13:4)

Being kind, isn't the same as being nice. Being kind means being aware of and responding to the needs of others. *If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? (1 John 3:17)*

4) Loving one another in this context also means that we genuinely care for others.

When we care for others, we are taking a genuine interest in who they are, not just what they want.

5) Ultimately, what loving each other in this context means is that we seek out what is BEST for the other person.

This is the closest definition of the word *Agape*. Thinking of the good of the other, rather than ourselves.

We won't be able to love everyone in the world around us, without God's help. We need His love to fill our emotional tank in order for us to have the capacity to love like God has called us to love.

This is where we need to come back to the overall context of this whole section of Romans 12-15. It starts with, *"In view of God's mercy."* The grace we have received in being children of God empowers us to live the life of love, God has called us to live.

Philippians 2:4

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others"

Just as Jesus gave up His life for God's purpose, let us live a self-sacrificial life of love for God's purpose.

Read: Romans 13:11-14

In this passage Paul answers the "why" question. Why ought we love each other in a Christlike way? Because, we are living for God's Kingdom, not this present world. When we live in the light of eternity, we live radically different to the values of this world. We live in the present with an eye on the future.

Let us lean in to God's love today, in order that we might be empowered to bring His love to the world around us.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

How is God's definition of love different from a worldly view of love?

Why is it so hard to love others in the way that God expects?

Why are some people difficult to love?

What might genuinely loving them look like?

How might spending time in God's presence empower us to love others?

How does knowing that God notices every act of kindness change how you interact with others?

How might we live differently now, if we consistently kept an eye on eternity?

Monday's Devotion – Love doesn't harm others

Romans 13:9

"Love does no harm to its neighbour."

Have you ever said something with the intent of hurting someone else? – Yep, we have all done it at some point in our lives. Maybe we felt at the time that it was justified. Either way, we probably didn't feel good about it after we said it.

The reason we feel guilty about harsh or mean things that we say, is that we are violating God's way of life. We are tearing down, rather than building up. We are doing harm, rather than doing good.

Love does no harm to its neighbour. This doesn't just include physical violence, it includes our words and even our thoughts. As Jesus said: *"Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement."* (Matthew 5:22)

The fullness of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives gives us a greater clarity and sensitivity around what is right and wrong in our thoughts, words and actions towards others.

Let us intentionally tap into the tremendously powerful resource that God has given us and bring love to those around us and not harm. May we not be the ones that cause others to stumble.

Tuesday's Devotion – Love delights in the truth

1 Corinthians 13:6

“Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.”

Not only is God's love not evil, it thrives in an environment of truth. This makes a lot of sense when you think about it. The devil is the father of lies and seeks to deceive and distort. God on the other end of the spectrum brings everything out into the light.

The more dishonest we are about our intent or motives the more we move away from truth and away from God's love. The more willing we are to be honest with who we truly are, the closer we will move towards God's love.

This is especially true in regard to our relationship with God. In order to relate well to God and receive the love He has for us, we need to be completely honest and humble before Him. Don't hide from God. Come clean before Him and He will pour His love into your heart.

This is also true in regard to loving others. When there is a lack of authenticity in our relationships, there will be a lack of genuine love. We need to be real with each other. We need to not cover things up, but bring things out into the light. We need to be open and real with each other. The more we do all this, the more likely it is that love will thrive in those relationships. Remember, love delights (or rejoices, or thrives) in the truth.

Wednesday's Devotion – Love is Kind (1 Cor 13:4)

What is the opposite to kindness? – It could be a several different things, but one of them is neglect.

Most of us don't go out of our way to harm others, or be mean to others, but we may neglect the needs of others. In a world full of need, we can easily slip into the default mode of looking past someone in need. We reason that we can't help everyone, so we end up helping no one.

The other reason we may neglect someone in need is that we so busy. There is just no margin in our lives to offer that helping hand. Around a year ago, we were moving house. On one trip on my own with a trailer full of stuff I looked in the mirror and could see I hadn't tied things down properly and I was about to lose my load. I had to stop quickly, put my hazard lights on and do some illegal parking to quickly tie down the load. A guy driving behind me saw it all happen and pulled over to help me. That's kindness. He could have neglected to help, or quite rightly been annoyed at me holding him up. I really appreciated his gesture, because he gave something that is precious to all of us – time.

When we are being led by the Holy Spirit in our lives, He will prompt us to show kindness to others. We will see a need and feel compelled to respond. As we do, we are bringing God into that space. We may be very surprised at the effect that act of kindness has in the present and we also have the knowledge that God registers it for eternity.

Thursday's Devotion – Love cares

John 10:14-15

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

It can be quite intimidating using an example from the life of Jesus, as we may reason that we can never live up to His example. However, there is an important thing to note when we look at the example of Jesus. Everything that Jesus did relied on the relationship that He had with His Father. We see this reflected in this passage with the line, *“just as the Father know me and I know the Father.”* The love that Jesus has for those around Him (His sheep) came from the Father. It was in His connection with God that Jesus found the power to love others more than anyone else has ever done.

Maybe you could take some time today and spend some time in God's presence. As you pray, ask God to reveal to you how much He loves you. Take some time and be grateful for that love and let it sink deep into your spirit.

Once you have done that, consider those God has placed around your life. Ask God to reveal to you how He sees them. What might be the next level of care you could express to them. Then ask God to empower you with the opportunity to bring His love through you to them today.

Friday's Devotion – Do what is best

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first," doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end.

30 years ago Gary Chapman wrote a book about how we give and receive love differently from each other. He described five different ways people express love to each other. He stressed the importance of understanding what your love language is and more importantly knowing the love language of the person you are in a relationship with. It is a very helpful and insightful book. However, knowing how someone close to you wants to receive love is only half the story. We also need to find the overall motivation to love.

What ought to sit underneath all our love languages is believing in the other person. Wanting what is best for them. Doing what we can for them to realise their full potential. Helping them become all that God created them to be.

Consider those in your close family and circle of friends today. What could you do that would communicate to them that you believe in them and want their best? Which love language would best communicate it to them?