

## Love Does

February 15, 2009

This is the third of a series of sermons on the great love sonnet in the Bible, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Corinthians. The chapter is surprising to us on several fronts. It spends a lot of time defining something that we think that we know the meaning of already. Most of us think we know the meaning of love from our infancy...we know it instinctually, in our guts.

But in reality, our society has a lot of misconceptions about the true nature of love. We hear things about love that confuses us. Love is spoken of like some infection that you catch and can't get rid of! You lose your mind and make stupid decisions! And you fall in love quickly, and out of love just as easily and without effort or reason. The truth is that none of this is reality. Love is a choice that we make of the will. It is something that we chose to do...more than something that happens to us. Yes, there are strong emotions involved...which are a gift from God. But we are not animals, we are human beings...made in the image of our creator God. We are ruled by Heart and mind and will...and Spirit. And we can chose to ignore our emotions and be ruled by our hearts and our minds and yes, even by our spirits. Ever relationship goes through its emotional ups and downs and if you leave when the tide goes out, you will fail to see the wonder and experience the wonderful emotion of when it comes back in...and it will!

The chapter begins by telling us that love is essential and foundational. Without it, we accomplish nothing even if we make sacrifices or work hard. Love is our source of strength. But more than that, love turns our hard work into sheer joy. When motivated by love, selfless, giving, generous love, doing for another becomes less work and duty and drudge and more joy and humble service and honor. It is hard to understand, but you know it when you see it. I have seen it a hundred times as a parent cares for a sick child or as I observe a spouse going

daily to visit their husband or wife in the nursing home...even after they don't really remember who they are any longer, or enduring the abuse of their grumpy, dying husband or wife. Love gives and gives and gives. Here is a window into what real love does....

The Smith family.....

The apostle also makes clear that some people have very odd views of what love is... so he spends quite a bit of time telling us what love is not like.

Love is not rude, arrogant, boastful, envious, or proud. It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it does not keep a record of wrongs done, but forgives and forgets, it does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices in the truth.

Each of these really flows from a sense of self worth and a sense of security. A person who is jealous or envious is really looking at themselves, not their beloved. What they have or don't have...not what is good or best for the other person. We might say in general that love focuses on the other person, not itself. Outward, not inward. That is true of so much of what is in this chapter...arrogance, boastful, rude, self-seeking, easily angered, even forgiveness. How often folks hold grudges of things that the rest of the world would have forgotten so long ago...

And so we know that love is important...the most important thing for us to have. And we know what love is not....but what is it...

Really, more appropriately, what does love do. For love is a verb, not a noun in most cases in the Bible. A verb, if you remember your Sesame Street, is an action word...it does something! Love is something that you feel, but also something that you do. Love is a choice of the will that is lived out in our attitudes and actions towards others and even towards ourselves.

We may not feel love toward this other person right now, but that does not mean that we do not choose to act in a loving manner toward them.

There are some big act of love that we can all do...and some small acts. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, love never gives up....

Love always protects.....

This does not mean that love is blind. Love sees the faults of another clearly. And loves does not sugar coat things. Love tells the truth. But love steps in front of and covers over the beloved. Love seeks to help, to lift up and shelter from harm the beloved. We can see this in parents providing for their children before they provide for themselves...even if it means that they go without. Love makes sacrifices for the beloved. Love is willing to work double shifts for that their children can get a better education and make something better of themselves. Love protects...literally to shelter or put a cover over. Love carries with it the emotion to care for and lift up, to protect and heal...to shelter from harm.

Remember, God seeks to love you this way too. From where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, who is my shelter and strength...

Love always trusts...

Love is not blind, nor is it stupid. Love does not allow itself to be fooled easily, nor does it allow itself to be hurt intentionally. Love is not a punching bag or a door mat.

But love is trusting, love gives the benefit of the doubt, and love seeks to allow the beloved to live up to our expectation, not down to our expectation. Love seeks the best in another, not the worst. Even if the search is sometimes like the search for Dr. Livingston in the heart of the African Jungle...I remind you that they found Dr. Livingston. A long

journey begins with a single step and love seeks to believe the best in another...to have faith and to keep faith.

Remember, God is love and God also always trusts...he never loses faith in you or gives up on you.

Love always Hopes....

This is like the last...love always looks forward. Remember, Love does not keep a record of wrongs done. Love does not rejoice in evil, but rejoices in the truth...love is always looking forward...trying to find something new. Not always looking back at what was.

It is hard to move forward if you are always looking in the rear view mirror. Love tries to put the past in perspective and keep it behind you...and keep it from interfering with the present. It can be hard at times, but over time it makes a big difference. Love always hopes. Love believes in the future.

Remember, God always Hopes in you...God always believes in your future.

Love Perseveres.

Love takes work sometimes. It does. Let's be real about it. There are times when it takes work to be a parent. The terrible two...the not so fun middle school years... the often confusing teenage years...you name it. Yet through it all you keep trying. Over and over again you keep on pitching. You keep on talking and working and trying...because you love them. The same is true in a marriage or a friendship or any other love...there are times when it is difficult. But love always perseveres. It keeps on trying...even in hardship.

Sometimes the hardships are deep and all you can do is cling to each other. You gain strength from each other and your love grows stronger and your love grows deeper as you journey together through the deep valleys together. Love perseveres.

And God is there with you. God perseveres with you too...

But in the end, Love lasts...it perseveres. We may not see the impact it has, but it has one. It can be a simple act of kindness that makes love real to another.

### Video Number 2

And Love never fails. It is always there, sometimes hiding. Sometimes you can't feel it on the surface, but is always there underneath. When everything else fails or falls away, there is still love. It never changes. It lasts.

In the world, the gifts that we seek will pass away. The knowledge we so eagerly seek now will become obsolete. Our wisdom will seem like ignorance someday. What we see now will then be like we were looking through a smoky mirror.

So now three things last, upon which you can build a lasting life...three foundations will hold...three rock solid piers will stand the tests of time:

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE,

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

FAITH: to believe, to trust in Christ..

HOPE: the future tense, looking ahead, following Christ into the future, being a disciple and seeking to follow Jesus all the way...

And LOVE: Christ Loves us: nothing can change that or take away from that Love.

And the Greatest of these is LOVE.