

20220504 03 Philippians 1:7-11 Love

⁷ just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸ For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

⁹ And this I pray, **that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,** ¹⁰ that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, ¹¹ being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:7-11)

funny lyrics of song about prayer

Paul begins the book by praying for his friends in the church. Paul prayed for people and he told them what he prayed for them. Paul LOVED his little church in Philippi. Notice that it is never recorded that Paul prayed for physical things. He prayed about the things that mattered most. He prayed that they would abound in GRACE and PEACE. And here, he is praying that their “love would abound in all knowledge and discernment”.

V. 9 – 11. The main thing that Paul is praying for them is LOVE. If a believer is loving like God wants them to love they are staying near to the heart of God. Love is the hallmark of the Christian faith. Sunday I spoke extensively about joy. I said that joy is not something that we pursue directly, rather it comes when we are pursuing our relationship with Jesus. When our relationship deepens, joy is as by-product of that relationship. Interestingly joy is born out of love. Jesus talked a lot about the centrality of love. Over in John 13 He tells His followers,

³⁴ *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.* ³⁵ *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (John 13:34-35). This love that Jesus is talking about is how the world knows that we are different. That is how the world knows that we are redeemed. We are not told that the world will know that we are His disciples by our perfect theology, our musical program, our building, our parking lot, or by our plans for the future. The world will know that we are His disciples IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Christians talk about the importance of loving God and loving others, but unfortunately we sometimes don't do it as well as we talk it. Often, we don't mind loving as long as it doesn't cost us our time, our talents, and our treasure. I have told this congregation all over and over, “whenever you love people it WILL ALWAYS COST YOU.” You cannot genuinely love others without a cost. It will cost your time, your talents, and your treasure.” True unselfish love **agape** (love expecting nothing in return), and **chesed** (totally unfailing loyal love) are the biblical words that describe God's love toward us and a model for the kind of love we should have for one another. We're talking about love that doesn't keep score. We're talking about love that never gives up.

Love has always been the defining central attribute about the essence of God. By essence, I mean WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE IS LIKE. In the Book of Leviticus, God instructs, “*You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*” (Leviticus 19:18)

Moses repeats what Jewish scholars call the **echad** (one - the unity) in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ⁴“*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*” ⁵ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”*

As we move on down into verse 11 of our Philippians passage, we see Paul praying that the Philippians would be, “*filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:11)*”. In his earliest book to the saints in Galatia, Paul told them that the fruit of righteousness was the fruit of the Spirit that is the product that comes forth out of a heart in pursuit of God.

It is that kind of pursuit and love for God that brings about real joy. Jesus repeated this call to love in His story of the Good Samaritan. Open your bibles to Luke 10:25. This passage is a fleshing out of what God says is important and it explains exactly who and how we are to love one another.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* ²⁶ *He said to him, “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?”* ²⁷ *So he answered and said, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ ”* ²⁸ *And He said to him, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.”* ²⁹ *But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”* ³⁰ *Then Jesus answered and said: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.”* ³¹ *Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.* ³² *Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.* ³³ *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.* ³⁴ *So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* ³⁵ *On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave*

them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' ³⁶ *So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"* ³⁷ *And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

The Jews thought of their "neighbor" as another Jew, but Jesus is showing them AND US that God has a broader definition of who a person's neighbor is. Loving our neighbor doesn't mean just loving people who are like us.

The story is full of convicting details. The "priest and the Levite" were both from the priestly line of Israel, yet they failed to help a Jew who had been beaten up and was in need. They were too caught up in themselves and their own agendas to be interrupted by God. Then a Samaritan came along and he was from a people group that the Jews hated and looked down on. He cared for the man's wounds and paid his lodging at the inn. The Levite and the priest both should have done this, but they were self-righteous and found any excuse to not help. We get in trouble when instead of listening to the Holy Spirit we decide who deserves our help or not. Jesus then asked the lawyer a simple question, "who was the good neighbor?" The lawyer replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus simply said, "Go and do likewise".

So who is our neighbor? Our neighbor is anyone we find ourselves around with whom we can share God's love. We are not just called to help those who look like us or who are deserving. This love business is hard. Jesus asks the questions about what's so wonderful about loving people with whom we're comfortable.

So how can we love? We love when we genuinely seek what is best for others. This doesn't mean we agree with everything they say or do. Nor do we have to act in a way to get someone's approval or

acceptance. Loving our neighbors means that we look outside of ourselves and attend to the needs of others. This means their spiritual and physical needs. This means like the Samaritans, we have compassion on others and help with their needs when we're able to do so. And, we love our "neighbor" the most when we share God's truth with them. Because in the end, it is only Jesus who can meet their every need. (John 14:6)

We are really loving our neighbors (including our neighbors who seem like enemies to us) when we act toward them and interact with them with a heart that first loves God. Our love for others comes from an overflow of God's love being poured into us. And all that love spilling all over the place results in JOY UNSPEAKABLE. And all of this is done Paul tells us "to the glory and praise of God."

Let us pray.