

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
February 3, 2013 Epiphany 4 Series C.
1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13



And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹²For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

A man named Michael walked out of jail last week and screamed, “I’m free, I’m free. Finally, after 18 years, I’m free.” I think it’s almost impossible to imagine what that must feel like. To be 19 years old – in court – convicted of being part of the murder of a limo driver and the FedEx executive back in 1995. You didn’t do it – and still – in court – you hear the word, “Guilty!” “Guilty?! But I didn’t do it!”, you say. But they don’t believe you. And so for the last 18 years you are in Sing Sing – a terrible prison – a convicted murderer! You say again and again, “But I’m innocent! I didn’t do it!” And they tell you again and again, “That’s what

they all say!" And you say, "But I didn't! I really didn't do it!" "Yeah, yeah, that's what they all say!" Lance Armstrong said again and again, "I didn't cheat!" And now he says, "Oh, yeah, I cheated. But so did everybody else!" Forgiveness – complete for Jesus' sake is a wondrous thing! Jesus died and rose again – so that all our painful hurtful mistakes are all covered with the blood of the Lamb of God! It is only in light of Jesus' forgiving love – empowered by Jesus' forgiving love – that we are able to live a life of love – that reflects to God's eternal glory. Our Bible reading today is about putting our faith into concrete action – by loving one another! Today God's Word says:

I. ~~Without Jesus' love we are nothing~~

~~It is only with Jesus' love we can do anything~~
The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today is from the Apostle Paul's first letter to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth. Today is the 2nd of what will be with Jesus' permission 11 Sundays from 1st Corinthians and 2 more Sundays from 2nd Corinthians. President Carelton Toppe wrote the People's Bible Commentary on 1st Corinthians and President David Valleskey wrote the People's Bible Commentary on 2nd Corinthians. The Apostle Paul spent 1 ½ years in Corinth – during his 2nd Missionary Journey. The most of any place except Ephesus where he stayed some 3 years. Prof. Scharf always used to say – work with me at the map. Corinth is located on a narrow isthmus – like in Madison – and so? A narrow isthmus – a strip of land that separated the Aegean Sea on the east – between Greece and Turkey – and the Adriatic – the sea between Greece and Italy. A lot of trade went through Corinth. That meant a lot of money – and with lots and lots of money come lots and lots of temptations. Paul encouraged his co-worker Timothy, **6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.** 1 Timothy 6:6-10 Often times – with lots and lots of money come sinful self-indulgence and sinful excesses! With lots and lots of money come temptations to want more and more – no matter how much you have – you want still more and more. And sometimes with lots and lots of money come temptations to think that laws which apply to

the little people – don't apply to me. And that is spiritual danger for sure. As the Super Bowl approaches – see how again and again – professional athletes with literally millions and millions of dollars – have tortured personal lives and painful marriages! Corinth was so famous for prostitution that the name of the city became synonymous with the sin. To Corinthianize was to buy “hugs and kisses” – much like Vegas today – is called “Sin City” – wickedness that happens there – is supposed to stay there!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – is about putting our faith into practice. Jesus died and rose again to buy us back. When you know the Gospel and believe it – it changes how you think and it changes how you act! It has to! **And yet I will show you the most excellent way. 13.1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.** We live in a world where there is a lot of noise! Think about it! On March 10th, 1876 Alexander Graham Bell said, “Watson, come here. I want you!” – into a telephone – and Thomas Watson heard him – over the phone. Back in the day – you had a phone – sitting on a table or desk – or fastened to the wall. You could have a really long cord – but you were fastened to the phone. Then came those really nifty little cordless phones – so you could walk around the house – out into the garage – even out into the yard. Now sitting in Church – almost everyone has a phone that can send texts, take photographs and video and tell you where the nearest brunch is – and when to turn when you are speeding down the by-pass! And yet – in spite of all this – I dare say – communications – loving forgiving communications is only worse! Have you ever been to a family “doings” where instead of visiting with the people all around you – that you seldom see face to face. And here there and everywhere – people are working their smart phones – scrolling up and down and up and down – and sending texts and checking Facebook? Each person in their own little world! Have you listened to the news lately? Again and again – people in positions of great public trust – say things that are patently false – and they know it. And yet – they publish and perpetuate lies, falsehood and the ever popular half-truths – in a never ending quest to make themselves look good and their enemy look badly! It seems – the greater the earthly power – the greater the corruption until great power leads to great corruption! Noise!

There is a terrible head-splitting racket all around – when Jesus’ forgiving love is missing!

² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

There are in this world all sorts of people who understand theoretical astrophysics. Do you know much about theoretical astrophysics? Topics studied by theoretical astrophysicists include: stellar dynamics and evolution; galaxy formation; magnetohydrodynamics; large-scale structure of matter in the Universe; origin of cosmic rays; general relativity and physical cosmology, including string cosmology and astroparticle physics. Astrophysical relativity serves as a tool to gauge the properties of large scale structures for which gravitation plays a significant role in physical phenomena investigated and as the basis for black hole (*astro*)physics and the study of gravitational waves. I love movies like *A Beautiful Mind* – where people with white-boards have these math problems – where I don’t even recognize half of the symbols they are using – but they do. And they look and they ponder and they consider – and then they make these little squiggles – and say – “Aha!” I love that! I love having cultivated smart friends – lots and lots of very smart friends. Then – when I don’t know the answer – I know to ask you – and you know the answer. That’s knowledge and that’s wisdom. The best part is – we know Jesus is the Way to Heaven – the only really and truly essential knowledge!

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love is patient...

That’s not easy! To wait – when you are in a hurry and want to get going – and the person you are dealing with is slow. The guy at the grocery store – that takes your little bags of Highlander Grogg and swipes them one at a time – swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe – straighten out the bag – smooth the little coffee grounds – swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe – beep! Now – I was in high school the last time I was paid to sack groceries – but I know for a fact – that you can punch a key – and it will ring up 10 packages of Highlander Grogg – or you can take the next one and swipe, swipe, swipe, swipe – straighten out the bag – swipe beep! Ah, only 8 more to go! Be patient! Think how patient Jesus is with me! Love is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs! Remember the dentist who nicked my tongue – when I

was just a little shaver – curious what he was doing back there – and then he stopped and said something far less than patient and helpful! Forget that! The teacher who was having a bad day – and questioned your IQ and your work ethic? Forget that! The supervisor who made it their hobby to make your life miserable – the co-worker that picked on you – the spouse – the sibling – the in-law that never missed an opportunity to tear you down? Forgive and forget. Hit the delete button. Select – delete – do not save. Wash that away from your memory. Let it go! Know again that Jesus has kept no record of your mistakes. Forgive anyone and everyone who has ever sinned against you. Do you know who that will help? It will help us – to forgive others their sins, debts, trespass even as Jesus always forgives us! Love keeps no record of wrongs!

⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. *The truth!* There are countless sermons given in the Wisconsin Synod – where the Pastor pauses just before the sermon and says out loud, **“LORD sanctify us through the truth – that is set us apart to belong to the Great I AM – sanctify us through the truth – your Word is truth!”** A very cynical Pontius Pilate said, “What is truth?” Sometimes it’s hard to tell. In this world all corrupted and infected by sin what is truth? There are all sorts of commercials for drugs on TV. They tell you that you should tell your doctor – that you think you should be taking this drug or that! Then they tell you – although this drug is very good for you – perhaps making your stiff and painful joints feel better – on the other hand some people take this drug and have a heart attack – or a stroke – or their tongue swells and you can’t breathe and maybe you die? That can’t be good! Or are the odds of that happening really remote? Or that little low dose aspirin – that’s supposed to be good for you? And so? Except now they are saying – that little aspirin might be responsible for older people going blind. That’s not good! Corn for ethanol. That’s good – right? Less dependence on foreign oil if we grow corn to make Ethanol – right? Or does Ethanol make the price of chicken feed go up to the point that the price of Super Bowl hot wings – is going through the roof? That’s not good – is it? Love rejoices with the truth of God’s Word. The unchanging truth is Jesus loves me!

Jesus lived the life I couldn't – then died in my place to forgive me! Jesus' forgiving love never fails. That's the truth!

Jesus' forgiving **love never fails.** That's why we are going to Heaven – because Jesus' love never fails! I read the other day about a little grandpa – literally only 5 feet tall – a little grandpa some 88 years old who loved fast food. He didn't play favorite – he just liked fast food – wrapped up in a piece of paper – in a little Styrofoam box – in a little cardboard box – fast food! Well, this little grandpa – 88 years old – passed away the other day. We read at the graveside – some of the most powerful gospel promises in all of God's Word. We read powerful Gospel promises – because when you stand in front of a casket – that is going to be lowered into the ground – you are confronted more than almost any other time – with the fact that the wages of sin is death. The Apostle Paul wrote the Thessalonians believers – **“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep – or to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again – and so we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep with him.”**

Don't grieve like people who have no hope. That's the kind of grief that is painful and hopeless – heartache and heart break. It hurts beyond words to explain. This little grandpa's family didn't have hopeless grief. In fact – they had the hearse stop on the way to the cemetery – stop and pick up one last Wopper – and put it by the spray on top of the casket. Then they got 40 more Woppers – that they had ordered ahead! There are not a few people I know – who have said – when they die – they want it to be a celebration – not so sad. This funeral was a celebration! When we go to Heaven – people who love us can celebrate – because Jesus died and rose again to forgive us. In the meantime our love will not fail – because Jesus' forgiving love never fails. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Pastor Anthony E. Schultz