

Epiphany 4-C (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)

February 1, 2004

Text: (Epistle lesson) 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13

*[chapter 13]*

*Maybe I can speak in different languages of people,  
maybe languages of angels.*

*But if I have no love, I am same-as a noisy bell...*

*Maybe God gave-me the gift of a prophet.*

*Maybe I understand all knowledge  
and understand God's secret things*

*Maybe I have a strong faith and can move mountains.*

*But if I have no love, I am nothing.*

*Maybe I give all my earthly things and money to poor people,  
and offer my life.*

*But if I have no love, I earn nothing.*

*True love is patient.*

*Love is kind.*

*Love is-not jealous*

*Love doesn't boast [brag: I-I-I]*

*Love is-not proud.*

*Love is not rude.*

*Love is not selfish.*

*Love doesn't anger quickly.*

*Love doesn't keep a list of wrong things other people do.*

*Love is not happy about evil.*

*Love is happy about TRUTH.*

*Love never gives-up,  
           never stops believing,  
           never lets hope dissolve.  
 True love remains and remains.*

*Love never ends.*

*All prophets work will end.  
 Speaking in different languages will stop.  
 The gift of secret knowledge will dissolve.*

*Our knowledge isn't perfect,  
           and our prophet's words are not perfect.  
 But when the Perfect One comes  
           [when Christ comes again]  
 then all these poor and weak things will dissolve.*

*Long-ago I was a child.  
           I talked as a child.  
           I thought [thinking] as a child.  
 Now I am a man, and I dropped my child talk and feeling and  
 thinking.*

*Now we only see a very obscure [cloudy] picture,  
           same-as people trying to see in an old dirty mirror.  
 But in the future we will see all things clearly, face-to-face.*

*Now I only know a little-bit;  
           but in the future I will know all things perfectly,  
           same-as God knows me.*

*In this life we have three wonderful things:  
           faith, hope and love;  
 but the very best is love.*

A long time ago, in the country named GREECE, there was a big, busy city, named CORINTH. [Sign? C-city?] That city had a lot of rich people and poor people,  
a lot of sin with sex and cults,  
a lot of crime and divorce...  
just like our America today.

Paul went to that city, and told people about Jesus.  
Many people turned, and accepted Christ.  
That started the first true church in Corinth.

But the sin in the city got in the church.  
The church had problems --  
rich Christian abusing poor Christians.  
The church had open sin --  
adultery and cults,  
fighting and arguments,  
same-as our American churches today.

While Paul stayed in Corinth, everything was fine. But Paul must leave, travel to other cities and preach God's love and forgiveness.

Paul leaves, finish. Then problems begin in the Corinth church.  
People started arguing. People mixed Christ with cults. Many problems!

Church leaders wrote a letter to Paul,  
asking his advice,  
asking him to solve their confusion.

Paul wrote three or two letters back to Corinth. Paul wrote to tell them about God's truth for  
faith,  
teaching,  
and life.

Today those two letters from Paul are in our Bible. We name those letters, "First Corinthians," and "Second Corinthians."

-----

As we saw in our lesson one-week-ago, one big problem in the Corinth church is PRIDE. Some leaders felt they were better than other people. Some people felt more important than other people.

Some people thought,  
     "I can't preach good,  
         therefore I am not a good Christian."

Is that right?

    If you can't preach,  
         does that mean the Holy Spirit is not in you?

Wrong.

    God makes some people able to preach.  
     God makes other people to teach.  
     God makes other people able to work and serve.

Some people said,  
     "You never help in the kitchen,  
         therefore you are not a good Christian."

    Those people had pride and anger.

But is that right?

    Does every good Christian need to become a good cook?

No.

God gives different abilities to different people. Then God brings us together, so we can help and serve the fellowship, as one body.

God wants us all to help each other in different ways. And when we work together, God uses us together to show the world His love and forgiveness.

"I - I - I" has no place in the church.

So what is the opposite?

Paul explains that PRIDE's opposite is LOVE.

That's strange, because we think Pride's opposite is shame,  
and we think that Love's opposite is hate.

No, the Bible says that self-pride and Love are opposite.

Why? Because if I am proud,

I worry about myself,

and I look-at-you through eyes already filled with sin.

But if I love,

I am-concerned about you,

and I look at you through Jesus' eyes.

First Corinthians 13 show us how:

*Maybe I can speak in different languages of people,  
maybe languages of angels.*

*But if I have no love, I am same-as a noisy bell...*

*Maybe God gave-me the gift of a prophet.*

*Maybe I understand all knowledge*

*and understand God's secret things*

*Maybe I have a strong faith and can move mountains.*

*But if I have no love, I am nothing.*

*Maybe I give all my earthly things and money to poor people,  
and offer my life.*

*But if I have no love, I earn nothing.*

That means, anything special you do,  
can be good, if you do it for love.

But if you do that good thing for pride,  
then that "good" thing stinks.

Sorry, but that's what the Bible says.

But if your heart is full of  
 Love to God, and  
 love for His people,  
 then your service is not really you, but Jesus serving through you.  
 And He gets all the praise and honor.

Reading more from First Corinthians 13:

*True love is patient.  
 Love is kind.  
 Love is-not jealous  
 Love doesn't boast [brag: I-I-I]  
 Love is-not proud.  
 Love is not rude.  
 Love is not selfish.  
 Love doesn't anger quickly.  
 Love doesn't keep a list of wrong things other people do.  
 Love is not happy about evil.  
 Love is happy about TRUTH.*

*Love never gives-up,  
     never stops believing,  
     never lets hope dissolve.  
 True love remains and remains.  
 Love never fails.*

One way to really understand this better is read these verses,  
 remove the word LOVE and put in the name of JESUS. For  
 example, I will read this again and put in Jesus' name

*Jesus is patient.*

*Jesus is kind.*

*Jesus is-not jealous*

*Jesus doesn't boast [brag: I-I-I]*

*Jesus is-not proud.*

*Jesus is not rude.*

*Jesus is not selfish.*

*Jesus doesn't anger quickly.*

*Jesus doesn't keep a list of wrong things other people do.*

*Jesus is not happy about evil.*

*Jesus is happy about TRUTH.*

*Jesus never gives-up,  
           never stops believing,  
           never lets hope dissolve...  
 Jesus never fails.*

When we do that, we can see what real love means.

Jesus shows us real love  
       when He died for us.

Jesus shows us real love  
       when He forgives us,  
       no-matter how many times we do wrong to Him.

If you know Jesus,  
       then you already know true love.

The world thinks that true love is only a warm feeling.

If feeling is gone, then love is gone. That is not true love.

True love, God's love doesn't depend on feeling.

God's love in you encourages you to do loving actions,  
       no-matter that you don't feel like doing it.

But if you love, you do the right thing, no-matter how you feel.

Now, ?can we really love other people

same as Jesus loves us?  
 Let us read these verses again,  
 and in place of Jesus' name,  
 put in your name.

I will put in my name, for example:

*[Preacher, put your name in the blank.]*

\_\_\_\_\_ *is patient.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *is kind.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *is-not jealous*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't boast [brag: I-I-I]*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *is-not proud.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *is not rude.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *is not selfish.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't anger quickly.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't keep a list of wrong things other people do.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *is not happy about evil.*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *is happy about TRUTH.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *never gives-up,*  
           *never stops believing,*  
           *never lets hope dissolve...*  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *never fails.*

Is that all true? No.

When I put my name in the verses,

I see myself as God sees me.

I see that I have not arrived,

and I need Jesus to forgive me,

and I need Jesus to show HIS love through me.

First Corinthians 13 ends with these words:

*Our knowledge isn't perfect,*



*and our prophet's words are not perfect.  
But when the Perfect One comes  
[when Christ comes again]  
then all these poor and weak things will dissolve.*

*Long-ago I was a child.  
I talked as a child.  
I thought [thinking] as a child.  
Now I am a man, and I dropped my child talk and feeling and  
thinking.*

*Now we only see a very obscure [cloudy] picture,  
same-as people trying to see in an old dirty mirror.  
But in the future we will see all things clearly, face-to-face.*

*Now I only know a little-bit;  
but in the future I will know all things perfectly....  
same-as God knows me.*

*In this life we have three wonderful things:  
faith, hope and love;  
but the very best is love.*

True, we have not-yet arrived to the level of Christ's love to us.  
We do not-yet understand God's ways.  
Our abilities and our serving are all fine,  
but we still need much improvement.

Stay patient. Some day we will be with Jesus face to face, and we  
will see clearly His love.

AMEN