

Pastor's Message  
May 17<sup>th</sup>

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I send you greetings from my house to yours. I hope this message finds you well and that you are able to find some peace and comfort in this new “normal” we are experiencing.

On Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> instead of the way that the Muhlenberg Churches Food Pantry has distributed food in the past, Helping Harvest (formerly the Berks County Food Bank) will be hosting a Mobile Market on our parking lot. The food has been pre-packaged in boxes and large bags and will be placed in the clients cars as they proceed through the parking lot. Distribution will begin at 1:30 and end either at 3:30 or when the food is gone. Please share this info with people who are in need of food.

We will continue to worship via Zoom on a Sunday morning at 10:30.

If you would like to join us, send an email to [GSELC4201@gmail.com](mailto:GSELC4201@gmail.com) and I will send you the meeting details.

Prayers for a good week.

Your Sister in Christ,

Pastor Denise

## I Corinthians 13:1-13

The first reading is from the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of I Corinthians beginning at the thirteenth verse.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup> For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup> but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup> And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

## Mark 12:28-31

The second reading is from the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the gospel of Mark beginning at the 28<sup>th</sup> verse.

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;’ <sup>30</sup>

you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

The Gospel of our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Let us pray

Loving Lord, you have showered your world with faith, hope, and love. Help us to be faithful to you, to offer hope to those in need, and to love all your children.

Amen.

This week we continue to hear the words that the apostle Paul had to share with the church in Corinth. Last week in the beginning of his letter, Paul urged the Corinthians to put aside their differences and to refocus their lives and unite themselves in Christ.

In this week's very familiar text, we hear Paul present to the Corinthians - a new vision of how we – as brothers and sisters in Christ are to be in relationship with one another.

Since this beautiful text is so often read at weddings and the renewal of wedding vows, we often think of this text as a description or a portrayal of romantic love. But Paul was not writing about romantic love or how husbands and wives are to live together in harmony and wedded bliss, even though this text offers really good advice for living in a relationship with a loved one.

But in this text, Paul is describing for us kingdom love - how God's people are to live together here on Earth to bring about God's kingdom

This divine love, this kingdom love finds joy and peace in serving and in caring for and in sacrificing for the well being of others. This

love is the sacrificial love that we have come to know through God's actions of sending his one and only Son to live among us and then to suffer and die for us

This kingdom love that Paul speaks of is that boundless love that Jesus modeled for us as he loved, cared for and treated with compassion the stranger, the swindler, the deranged, the disrespected, the outcast and all of those that society had deemed as the least, the lost and the last.

This kingdom love is the unconditional love that we hear from the cross as Jesus asks the Father to forgive us for we know not what they are doing.

Jesus showed us how to love all God's people extravagantly without bounds or conditions. Not just family and friends and those who looked like, sounded like and agreed with him, but all people, from all walks of life and from all corners of the world.

And what Paul is telling the Corinthians this morning in this part of his letter is that united in Christ, we as individuals and we together as God's church are to act loving following in Jesus' footsteps for the sake of our neighbor. For when we love as Jesus

taught us, we are indeed doing God's work to restore God's kingdom here on Earth.

And to make sure the Corinthians understood exactly what kind of love this is the apostle Paul lays out what their actions of love need to look like and sound like

As he writes:

Love is patient

Love is kind

this divine love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.

And when we love this way, we do not insist that we have things our own way;

And even when what we are called to do for the sake of our neighbor is hard or humbling or down right disgusting, we are not to be irritated or resentful;

Divine love would never rejoice in wrongdoing, but will always rejoice in the truth, no matter how hard the truth is to hear

Divine love takes us through all the trial and tribulations of our lives for it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

This divine love – this kingdom love - lasts

It was clear from the beginning of Paul's letter that this is not at all how the Corinthians were treating one another, but this is the vision of life in God's kingdom that Paul is presenting to the church in Corinth.

They are not only to set aside their differences and come together united in Christ to build up their faith community. But, it will take acting out of a love for the neighbor to strengthen their community.

It is certainly an understatement for me to say that we are living in times like no other that we have experienced in our lifetime. The way we have always done things: like shopping, and working, and playing, and entertaining and worshiping are either not being done at all or are being done in new and different ways.

But what hasn't changed in this time of not doing things the way we have always done things is: how we strive to love one another as Christ has first loved us, how in the midst of all the challenges and trials and tribulations we are reaching out to serve our brothers and sisters in need, how we are making sacrifices that even put our livelihoods at risk so that those in our community those who are most vulnerable may be safe, and how we love one another and support and pray for one another through the highs and the lows we are experiencing

Paul ends this portion of the letter to the Corinthians by telling the Corinthians that they can not yet see clearly the ways of the kingdom, which might have meant that this kind of sacrificial, unbound and abundant love does not yet make sense to them.

But Paul urges them to keep working at becoming the kind of community that Christ has called them to be: by trusting in God

always, by hoping relentlessly, and by love extravagantly.

For no matter how scary the storm that we are encountering, no matter what else we have lost or see slipping away: faith, hope and love can never be taken away from us. For it is our faith that keeps us connected to God, it is our hope in resurrected life that gives us the courage and confidence to keep

on going through the hard times and it is the love of Jesus and loving like Jesus that keeps us connected to one another.

And loving like Jesus loves us is the kind of love that binds us together forever and that kind of kingdom love is the greatest of all.

AMEN

### Blessing

May the light of God surround you  
The love of God enfold you  
The power of God protect you  
The presence of God watch over you  
Now and forever more.

AMEN