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What Kind of Love?
1 Corinthians 13:1-13

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. ² 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. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,^[a] but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ 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. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ 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. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly,^[b] 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. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

The 1999 movie *Tuesdays with Morrie*, based on the book, is the true story of a sports writer, Mitch Albom, and his reunion with his former college professor who is dying of ALS. Albom is a multitasking workaholic, whose life is a series of hurried appointments, rushed phone calls, and last minute sprints to catch a flight. But when he discovers that his friend, Morrie Schwartz, was in the *last stages of ALS*, he honors a long-overdue promise to visit.

In these visits, Morrie teaches Mitch some *important lessons* about what matters most in life.

On one occasion, Morrie is very frail, and is lying in a recliner in obvious pain. He grimaces and asks Mitch to rub his aching feet. "When we're infants," says Morrie, "we need people to survive; when we're dying, we need people to survive; but here's the secret: *in between*, we need each other even more."

Mitch nods and responds with a quote that he has heard Morrie say many times.
"We must love one another or die."

Morrie loses patience with Mitch.

"Yeah, but do you believe that? Does it apply to you?"

"I just don't understand it," says Mitch.

It's a very simple lesson", says Morrie, "We must love one another or die,"
 Tuesdays with Morrie (Touchstone, 1999), based on the book Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom;

We must **love one another** or die.

That's what Paul is saying in this passage from 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is **essential**.

Love is what **life** is all about.

When we come to the end of our lives, love is what matters.

The **victims of 9/11** didn't make final phone calls to people to say,

I hate you, or you hurt me.

They left messages of love.

I love you—Tell them I love them. . [*You're Nothing Without It,*](#) Rev. Michael
 Bos, *Day 1*, 2013.

Love is main thing **on our minds** when we look back over our lives.

Because love **gives meaning** to our existence.

Kids are often able to see love when we overlook it.

Listen to some kids' answers, when asked, **What is love?**

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her **toenails** anymore. So my **grandfather** does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

"When someone loves you, the way they **say your name** is different.
 You know that your name is safe in their mouth."

"Love is when someone hurts you, and you get so mad, but you **don't yell** at them because you know it would hurt their feelings."

"Love is when my **mommy makes coffee** for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is okay."

"Love is what's **in the room with you at Christmas** if you stop opening presents and listen."

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man **who are still friends** even after they know each other so well."

"Love is when *Mommy sees Daddy smelly* and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford."

"Love is when *your puppy licks your face* even after you left him alone all day."

"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should *say it a lot. People forget.*" What Is Love—From a Kid's Point of View, LightSinger, (3-14-02);

When have *you seen love*?

Isn't love what makes *life worth living*?

According to God,

Love is what we were *created to be, and do*.

Our purpose is to *learn how to love* the way God loves us.

Edward Markquart, of Seattle Grace Lutheran, preached this:

*God commands us to love one another in these ways..but... It is like God commanding **fish** to swim. It is like commanding **birds** to fly. It is like God commanding **daffodils** to be beautiful. When God commands us to love as God loves, God is simply commanding us to be the kind of people that **we were created to be in the first place.***

Love is who we children of God are *created to be*, what we were created to do.

But in reality, it's not something that comes naturally.

We don't always get it right, do we?

These words from 1 Corinthians

are familiar to most of us through *weddings*.

But they weren't intended for couples getting married.

Not at all.

They were written to a *community* in Corinth

who were fighting, arguing, trying to prove who was right, who was better than someone else...

They were a church full of conflict, competition, and division.

These were people who were driving each other crazy, and Paul writes to remind them of their *purpose*.

To *love* one another.

Not compete, not fight, not divide, but LOVE.

But we all know that even if we are created to love—

It's much *easier said than done*.
 In fact, we really can't do it on our own,
 We need God's help.
 A LOT of help, right?

Truth is, real love *comes from God*---and *flows through us*.
 And it requires *effort, and work*.
 Loving like this, in 1 Corinthians, takes *maturity*.

Pastor Kevin Armstrong said,
 .. *the grown-up Christian recognizes that marriages and friendships and relationships and church communities bring together all kinds of different people with different gifts and different ideas. And, as wonderful as it is, sometimes that all just sort of drives us crazy. And we are reminded once again: Love is patient. Love is kind.* ...Kevin R. Armstrong, "Cultivating Attentiveness", Faith and Leadership.com

Just think—how has your *idea of love changed* over the years of your life?
 When we are *little*,
 Love is all about what is mine, what makes me happy, what I will get from others.

As we grow up, love evolves into *friendships and infatuations*,
 and it can be full of *emotional* ups and downs.

What about your *own journey* learning to love?
 Do you remember your ideas of it changing over time?
 And what about now, *how do you view love*?

The apostle Paul reminds us that although Jesus tells us
 to be child-like, we are *not to be child-ish* in our love.
 Real love takes maturity.
 It means getting beyond ourselves, beyond our feelings.
 Real love says I *hear* you, and I'm *here* for you.
 It's not about self.
 It's about *giving of self*.

Real love is a *verb*, a *way* that we live,
 not something that just happens to us.
 Real love is *deeper than any emotion*,
 And *extending* far beyond ourselves.

Listen to what Paul says about real love:

*11 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. 12 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**. 13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the **greatest** of these is love.*

Real love, mature love recognizes that there are some people who are **hard to love**. When we think of them, there are no warm feelings. There may even be **frustration, or fear**.

How do we love through that?

We can't. We have to go **back to the Source**.

And ask God for the power to love.

And then, Like Nike's old motto,

We Just do it.

Some of the challenge of mature love is just doing it. Even when we don't feel it—We just **do** it.

C.S. Lewis once famously wrote in *Mere Christianity*,
“Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did.

As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets.

When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love [them].”

Real love is mature,
 And self-giving,
 but even our very best love for one another is just a **foretaste** of the love of God that we will experience in heaven. That's what Paul means when he says....

. 12 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.

So how do we **know and experience** the love that Paul describes? The **best** place to **find** it is in one person---**Jesus**. The best way to experience it, is through a **relationship** with Him.

Remember what Paul said in **Philippians 2: 5-8**:

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but **emptied himself**, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he **humbled** himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.*

Don't the words in 1 Corinthians describe the *love of Jesus*, for each one of us? That love of God for us, is something we need to understand, So that we might love others the same way.

When we *know God loves us, it's so much easier* to love others! We're not conjuring up feelings or actions, we are loving—*because we are loved*.

This is the love that we celebrate at the *Lord's Table* today! The *bread and the cup*, they are His love given to us. They are the spiritual food and drink—that give us the strength to share that love.

Listen to Paul's description of love again:
*Love is **patient**; and **kind**; love is not **envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude**. It does not insist on its **own way**; it is not **irritable or resentful**;
6 it does not rejoice in **wrongdoing**, but rejoices in the **truth**. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, **endures** all things. 8 Love **never ends**.*

Those are some *powerful* words. At times, we seem to live exactly the *opposite*. But this is how *God loves us*. And how *we are called to love* one another.

Do you know how we *see and experience* the love of Jesus today? Sometimes it's on our own in worship, or prayer, or the Word. But more often than not, it's through *one another*.

The love Paul describes is what makes a true community of people called the *body of Christ*, the church.

You know, there's a reason that Jesus commanded us to love one another as He loves us. It's because love, or the lack thereof, is arguably the *most powerful force* in the whole world.

William Barclay once said: *More people have been brought into the church by the kindness of **real Christian love** than by all the theological arguments in the world, and more people have been driven from the church by the hardness and ugliness of so-called Christianity than by all the doubts in the world.* William Barclay, Leadership, Vol. 9, no. 3.

Jesus said it himself.

They will *know we are Christians* by our what? By our **LOVE**.

The real love Paul describes in 1 Corinthians,
is something we can *know and experience* in our families of faith,
and in our relationships,
By the grace and gift of God.

We've all seen *glimpses* of this real love in our own lives.
Think right now about *where you have witnessed* this kind of real love....
Who has demonstrated it?
To you?
To those around you?

I've seen it between my *parents*—
the kind of love that allows my stepmom to care for Dad every day, all day,
—taking care of his medication, his diabetes, his heart,
even his mind—gently reminding him when he can't remember the details of their
lives, and doing all of this for as long as they both are alive.

It's the love I see *between so many of you*.
Caring for one another through hugs, conversation, food, and prayers.

That's what we need to *nurture*.
That's what we need to *teach* our children.
That's what we need to *encourage*—more than anything else in our personal lives,
or this church.
That's something our *world so desperately needs* today.
To know we are Christians by *our love*.

As you leave today, take your bulletin with you.
Inside you will find a few *post-it notes*.
I want you to write something loving—to someone this week.

A word or phrase of encouragement, A Bible verse about love.
Something that reminds them—I hear you, and I am here for you.
Something that *shows God's love*.

Everyone I know could use an encouraging and loving word from someone.
We all need to be reminded that *we are loved*.
And that we are the *instruments* of God's love.

Friends, hear the *Good News* of the Gospel.
We are *loved*, so that we might *love one another*.
This is the way people know we follow Jesus.
And to that, all God's people said,
Amen.