

1 Corinthians 13 NKJV

*1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. 13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; **but the greatest of these is love.***

Let's pray together:

As I announced last week we are taking a brief break from our walk through the Gospel of St. Luke. Over the course of the next few weeks I want to share a series of messages to help us identify what I believe should be the basic core values of a vibrant local church body; specifically, Christ United Church.

Let's define what a core value is. Core values are those values we hold which form the foundation on which we conduct ourselves. Core values are not descriptions of what we do or the strategies we employ to accomplish our mission. The values underlie our work, how we interact with each other, and which strategies we employ to fulfill our mission. The core values are the basic elements of how we go about our work. They are the practices we use (or should be using) every day in everything we do.

There are four core values I want us all to become familiar with, not only in awareness but in practice, here at Christ United Church. I desire that we each would commit to allowing the Holy Spirit to shape us as a people who are 'loving, serving, giving, and growing.'

Given our very familiar text this morning it doesn't take a rocket scientist to recognize that the initial and the primary core value I have identified is LOVE. Hence verse 13, *'but the greatest of these is love!'*

The first core value I want to hold up before you as foundational to each of us as Christians and as a local church body is that we are wholeheartedly committed to being a LOVING people; a people who love and are committed to:

- Loving God
- Loving each other
- Loving the lost

1. Loving God

Matthew 22:35-38

35 'Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment.

Loving God involves surrendering yourself to Him totally as best you know how: reckless abandonment, not partial acknowledgement.

'all your heart, all your soul, all your mind...'

This doesn't mean simply just saying the 'RIGHT' words either; LOVING God involves doing the 'RIGHT' stuff as well!

John 14:15

"If you love Me, keep My commandments.'

Matthew 15:7-8 NKJV

'Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

This sounds elementary; however, do you remember the passage we read from **Revelation 2:4** last week? After heaping commendation and praise upon the church at Ephesus for their mighty works [projects] the angel declares *'Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.'*

Yet they were still going on.

Astronomers tell us that the light from a polar star takes 33 years to reach earth. That star could have become darkness 30 years ago and we wouldn't even know it because the light of its brilliant past would still be visible even though the source has been extinguished years ago. Wow!

There is no possible way we could even begin to cover the subject of loving God. This is simply an introductory overview. We will delve deeper into this subject matter in the coming months in various manners.

2. Loving each other

Matthew 22:37-39

37 'Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment .39And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

The second commandment: this must be pretty important, huh?

Galatians 6:9-10 NLT

9 So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. 10 Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.'

Not just the loveable neighbor either but the one that drives you nuts!

The Golden Rule

Luke 6:31-33 NLT

31 Do to others as you would like them to do to you. 32 "If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! 33 And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much!

Motivated by love we are to treat others without partiality as our DIVE study in James reminded us recently.

I have been meeting with David Hill over the past several weeks now. [I have David's permission to share this]. David is being drawn to minister to those who are challenged with mental illnesses. He himself suffers from Turret's Syndrome and has felt the sting of being labeled as 'unlovable' because of the stigmatism and perception of the illness. Actually May is Mental Health Awareness Month and I have asked David to assist me during a Sunday morning message to share about the faith community and their response to people with mental illness.

There are several cliché's such as '*love is a verb*' or '*love isn't love till you give it away.*'

3. Loving the lost

This is basic **John 3:16** stuff by the way.

"For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son."

Matthew 14:14

*'And **Jesus** went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with **compassion** toward them, and he healed their sick.'*

It will cost you something! You'll have to get your hands dirty a bit.

Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:36-37

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."

Newsflash!

Not all Christians and not all churches are willing to love the lost!

Listen to this e-mail I received this week:

My friend's church is looking for a new full time pastor, youth pastor and music minister. The boards in charge of making these choices are all in disagreement. Just as an example, a female board member in charge of the music minister made the comment that she didn't want contemporary worship because that might attract the unsaved.

Are you kidding me? [e-mail from another member about the church in Ohio that holds Saturday evening services in a bar while they are serving beer. My response is that I think I would rather go to the bar and have church with the lost than to the church which BARS the lost!]

1 Timothy 3:1-5 NKJV

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

'having a form of godliness but denying its power.'

I am suggesting to you the power of godliness and the gospel is love!

Form means: a semblance, a shadow, or a representation

Conclusion:

2 Chronicles 12:1-9

The Israelites had forsaken God; you might say they had left their first love.

2 Chronicles 12:10-11

So they just made brass shields as a 'form' of the original pure gold ones. Nobody probably initially noticed.

Brass is a substitutional alloy of copper and zinc which has a muted yellow color, somewhat similar to gold. Brass is used for decoration for its bright gold-like appearance. [Wikipedia]

There is no 'substitutional alloy' for God's love. *'We love because He first loved us!'*

As you have set your heart and soul to seek the Lord and find Him as He said you would He will search your heart and inquire about the intents of your thought: do you love? Is it a golden shield you are bearing or is it of brass? Do you love God, each other, the lost?

Is your shield of love made of gold or brass? The Lord knows

1 Chronicles 28:9 *"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.*

Communion: God represents His love to you through the bread and the cup!