

June 29, 2014 “The Dominant Chord” Pt. 4 1 Corinthians
13

I mentioned in the first of these meditations on 1 Corinthians 13, that there are those who say and write, that preachers talk about love when they have nothing or very little to say. The principle flaw in that overview of the subject is that love is easy. After all, it has to be admitted everyone does it. Everyone loves. In fact you may remember the lyric from a popular song. “Everybody loves somebody sometime....” I can remember that song from my teen years. The singer was Dean Martin.

I mention the lyric for a specific reason. It reveals things. It reveals things about the popular view of love. And at the same time it reveals something about our sinfulness, our failure to love as Jesus loved and loves us. Everbody loves somebody, sometime. The line actually brings to mind a childhood memory. I had done something wrong. Something I knew I should not do. Something of which my parents did not approve. Something that could bring on “punishment” which in those days I associated with pain and tears. “Everbody does it I would wail” in hopes of escaping the punishment I knew would come. It mattered not that I could not name who everybody was! I sought to justify myself in a moment when I knew I had done something that was wrong.

Everybody loves somebody. It is revealing that the lyric gives us no name at this point. It is almost as though there is no need to know who everybody loves. It's not deep. It may indeed not be for long. It probably was not all that memorable an act. Or maybe it is that the act itself was so disappointing the somebody has long since been forgotten.

Everybody loves somebody,...sometime! This may be the most revealing truth in the lyric. It is rare. It is not common. It is certainly not a way of life. Everything 1st Corinthians 13 says on the subject of love flies in the face of this shallow understanding of what love is. 1st Corinthians 13 is addressing the unasked question, "what does the Christian lifestyle look like? What does the chief principle of Christian Ethics look like?" And of course the answer in both cases is, it looks like love. It looks like Jesus dying on the cross for people who do not believe He is the Saviour. For people who have said they believe, and yet have in the darkness of the night claimed no association with Him. For people who have taken profit and gain from the relationships which ought to be the most meaningful in their lives. Jesus said love God and love your neighbour. We fail. We fall. We sin. When we fail to love either one. And at the same time we betray our Lord and our God.

This morning we pick up the thread at verse 5. "Loves is not rude." It is the dominant chord in the theme of

Christian ethics. When we are rude we inevitable hurt someone. We inevitably do harm to the relationship we have with them. While we were away from you last week...June 22nd rolled around. For Barbara and I our 46th wedding anniversary. As it turned out we went out for dinner with our daughter. A little Italian restaurant in down town Brampton. The waiter was a lovely man, kind and gentle and perceptive. We were on our way out of the restaurant and he asked me “Was this a special occasion?” Barbara and Rebekah were preceeding me toward the door, and I paused to tell him it was our anniversary, that the young woman was our daughter. “You should have told us he said!” “No,” I replied...and he nodded, all he said was “Belle, belle!”

It was a special occasion. I did not want to embarrass Barbara, or Rebekah. We went out to eat dinner together. Not to celebrate publicly. And the 46 years we have shared frankly are too precious to take a chance on what might happen if it became a public occasion with people we do not know. Love is not rude. I will put it as positively as I can. Love is always protective of the others in the circle. Protective of feelings. Protective of sensitivities. Love is not rude. In this case the people in that tiny family circle were and are just too precious to take a chance on what might occur. What might be said, or done.

Ethics. “Love is not self seeking.” There is nothing coy about that statement. Loving as Jesus loved and loves, we do not say or do things to the single end that we promote our own stock. Self seeking has one goal. Put the spot light here! When Jesus was tempted by the devil 3 times, the third temptation was the best illustration of self seeking I can think of. The devil said to Jesus, You see the whole world lying before you, all the kingdoms, all the countries. I, said the devil, I will give you every one of them....all you have to do....is bow down and worship me. It was not a conversation about friendship. It was not about the devil’s concern for Jesus. It was about twisting that relationship so that the devil received something he could never have otherwise. An attempt to purchase Jesus ‘ loyalty. To displace God, in the life of the Son of God. To neutralize the Saviour of the world.

Love does not use people. That’s the way we would say it. Love does not use people. We are called of God in the whole span of our relationship from the closest in our families, to the most casual acquaintances we have...to not use them to advance ourselves. Where we have power and in relationships there is always a measure of power...to not spend people as though they were currency. Love is not self seeking. When Jesus was on trial. How easy it would have been. Who could criticize Him if when Herod had said “Amuse me. Show me a miracle.” Think of what Jesus could have done. Somebody

present must have been feeling ill. A basin of water....Jesus could have turned into wine or even something stronger. He could have played along. He could have sought....No. He had tunnel vision.

All He could see, all He would see, all He willed Himself to see....was your need and mine. What sin does to us. How it bends us under its burden. How it distorts us, so that we behave as though we were not the children of God. Before Herod, before Pilate, before the soldiers who whipped Him to within an inch of His life...He did not seek His well being....Jesus sought our well being, our healing, no matter the pain, no matter the cost. Love is not self-seeking. It is about how we treat others, loving people. It is about treating others, all the others we meet...in the imitation of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

“Love is not easily angered.” I am probably going to say the least about this one because I find it the hardest to cope with in my own life. It is the dumbest kind of sin. And one that sneaks up on me, leaving me with a terrible burden of guilt. Usually when I am tired. I get short...short tempered. With the people I love most. I find myself in the darkness...knowing I have thrown my tongue around, carelessly...another song lyric....you always hurt the one you love....the one you shouldn't hurt at all. I find myself in the

darkness when I am easily angered, because I know Jesus does not approve. And how I will try to justify my conduct, as though saying more in defense of my lost temper would somehow make it right! Lost temper, easy anger.... What Paul is telling us is Jesus does not approve.

“Love does not keep a record of wrongs.”

Scorecards are the quickest way to kill a friendship, end a relationship. He did it 10 times. She did it three.

Remembering the score. Keeping records to remember the score. In the movie “For the Love of the Game,” Billy Chapple, a major league pitcher at the end of his career says, “In Baseball we count everything.” Balls, strikes, hits, strikeouts, wins, losses, almost...almost losses, almost wins. For the sportsfan the study of the statistics is in many ways torture. The cross of Jesus Christ brings into our lives and before us the ultimate act of love. Forgiving and forgetting. Forgiving and wiping the scoreboard clean. No Runs, No Hits, No Errors, just the healing love of God that wipes away sin.

That’s what is amazing about the grace of God. It requires us to remember that when He forgives....He forgives all the way. Washed in the blood of Jesus. Means clean, not sort of, but cleansed. Love really is the dominant chord. It is supposed to be the one thing we always remember. Love does

not keep a record of wrongs....neither should we. Neither should we.

Let us pray;

Lord, it is as though we were back in kindergarden. So much to learn. So much that we know and yet so soon we forget it. Grant us your grace, to love like Jesus. Not rude. Never promoting ourselves at others expense. Help us in the midst of the furnace to see that anger will only hurt somebody else...and ourselves. It's so wonderful Lord we find it the hardest thing to believe...that the clean slate, your forgiveness....means the slate is really clean. Teach us to love. By your Spirit of Holiness empower us to love...the way you love. Amen.