

Order of Worship for January 30, 2022

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: *“Where Charity and Love Prevail”* - Hymn #845

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: In times of stress and fear, people turn inward and serve their own needs. Jesus steps into our lives, stills our fears, and teaches us to love, to be footwashers. In the splashing water of His love, He renews our understanding of what greatness is.

Lesson: John 13:1-5

P: It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

P: This is the Word of Our Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Confession:

P: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. If shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant;

C: “And whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28)

P: We confess to You, Lord Jesus, that we are afraid to be servants of one another.

C: How will it look, getting up from the table, taking a basin of water and a towel, and washing the feet of the disciples? Won't they come to expect it?

P: While they move ahead in the Kingdom. I'll remain the taken-for-granted footwisher.

C: How will it look, getting up from my comfortable routine and helping him, her? Will they understand that I can only help them this once? Won't they take me for granted as they always have?

P: We're afraid to be servants, Lord. We've tried it occasionally in the past, and we remember—the surprise on some faces: “You, a footwasher?” . . .the questioning look on others: “You're washing my feet?” . . . the haughty look on others: “Oh, yes, you the footwasher.”

C: We're afraid of that, Lord. And we're afraid of the effect-what it will cost us:

P: In self-respect, in time, in losing our place, in losing out, in losing. How will it look, Lord?

C: “Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.” (John 13:3-5)

P: That's what it looks like! It looks like Jesus, bending down into our lives, taking the form of a servant, and loving us, even to His death on the cross.

C: This is what it looks like: “As you did it to one of the least of these My brothers and sisters, you did it to Me.” (Matthew 25:40)

P: This is what it looks like: to be free of fear in the freedom of Christ, to be freed up to love as He loves us. “This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.” (1 John 4:9)

C: “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:7-8)

P: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,

C: that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

ALL: We confess to You, Christ Jesus, that we are so often afraid to be servants and thus have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Bend down to us, Lord Jesus, and by Your holy suffering, death, and resurrection free us from sin and show us how to love.

P: Beloved in Christ: our Lord Jesus Christ heard the prayer of our soul. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning

sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) He came to live among us. He stooped down to wash the feet of His disciples, taking upon Himself the task of a slave. He stooped down in order to be lifted up on a cross, taking upon Himself the sins of the world. His life is your life by faith. Your sins are forgiven. Now you do not need to be afraid to love by serving.

C: Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn of Praise: *“What Wondrous Love is This”* - **Hymn #543**

Call to Communion:

P: God’s love for us is so great that He does not limit His promises to us to just words. In the Sacrament of Holy Communion He calls us to gather at the table of His Son, Christ Jesus, who invites us to receive His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Let us come forward in true faith, not doubting, but believing that what is sealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus is as real as God says it is.

The Words of Our Lord

Lord’s Prayer

Holy Communion: *“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”* - **Hymn #700**
“Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness” - **Hymn #636**

Dismissal

Lesson: 1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13

R: And yet I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

R: This is the Word of Our Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Sermon Hymn: “Love in Christ is Strong and Living” - Hymn #706

Sermon- “Love” - 1 Corinthians 13

You are probably thinking that the pastor is all messed up. We are supposed to have Holy Communion after the sermon, not before. What’s going on? Please hold that thought.

Once upon a time there was a beautiful valley. The fields were filled with grains of wheat and corn, the orchards bursting with apples, oranges, and nuts, the pastures of lush green with grazing cattle and sheep, barns neat and painted red, the houses of the village clean and decorated with flower boxes. Everyone dwelt in happiness until a shadow appeared over the land. An evil dragon came and poisoned the river that led through the valley. Crops failed and animals died. The dragon seized the princess of the land and took her back to his castle.

The people of the land struggled to stay alive. As the years went on they realized as long as the princess was held captive in the dragon’s castle, they would continue to suffer. So they began to identify among themselves those brave and strong enough to defeat the dragon. They promised that whoever rescued the princess could have her hand in marriage. Young men looked up at the tower in the dragon’s castle where the princess was imprisoned. They saw how beautiful she was and eagerly lined up to be the hero. She looked at the first volunteer—tall, dark, and handsome—and said, “There he is!” But when the young man came face-to-face with the dragon, he ran away in terror. Several others did too. One bravely tried to face the dragon, but was burnt to a crisp by the fire from the dragon’s mouth. Soon all the would-be heroes fled in a panic.

The people of the valley sent out messengers to other villages. Was there a brave hero who could come forward and be our champion who could defeat the dragon? Young men came to the village. They looked so capable and strong. The princess looked out from the tower and thought, “Surely, one of them has to be my hero.” But the dragon destroyed one prince with fire, gobbled another down, and flung one with his tail into another land. The rest fled in fear. Would they ever find someone to rescue the beautiful princess and restore their valley?

Then a new volunteer stepped forward who had been sent by a wise king. He was no handsome prince. He was an ogre with a hunched back, green colored skin, and the ugliest face in the world. The people laughed when the ogre said, “I will fight the dragon.” But their laughter quieted as the ogre went forward to the dragon’s castle. Seeing him from her tower, the princess thought, “Who is this? He can’t be my champion, can he?”

The dragon breathed his fire on the ogre and slashed out at him with his tail, but the ogre deftly dodged the dragon’s blows and thrust his sword into the dragon’s breast. The dragon fell over dead. The princess was free! But was this ugly dragon to be her champion? Would she have to spend the rest of her life with this ugly beast? Would he turn into a handsome prince, like the story of the frog who was kissed by a princess?

Fairy tales often end with the word, “And they all lived happily ever after.” God’s Word is not fairy tales. Instead of beginning with the words, “Once upon a time,” stories in the Bible often begin with the words, “And it came to pass.” Yet the words of 1 Corinthians 13, St. Paul’s famous “love chapter,” are so often tied in with a “fairy tale” way of doing a wedding. They are the very words that the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister Tony Blair read from the Bible at Princess Di’s funeral. So when we hear about “love,” it is easy to see love as a wonderful, warm feeling that two people have for each other as they look into each other’s eyes and say, “I love you.”

Then why a year later or 20 years later when the kids grow up do these couples split? They say, “We don’t love each other anymore.” What happened to that love?

Paul didn't write those words for a wedding ceremony or for a Hollywood script. He wrote then in the context of a discussion of spiritual gifts. Some Christians were using the gifts they had to show how they were better than other Christians. Paul was showing that love, real love, puts the other person first. It is not about "me," but about "others."

Our view of love is often different. We say, "I love you," but what we really mean is that we love ourselves enough that we want the affection and attention that we get from that other person. We love to get love in return. It is like, "I'll scratch your back, if you scratch mine." Jesus put it this way in Luke 7:

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even "sinners" love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good for you, what credit is that to you? Even "sinners" do that. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend without expecting to get anything back.

Real love is to love without any strings attached, without any conditions, without anything in return. To love is to love as God loves us.

So what happened when the princess kissed the ogre? Did he become Prince Charming? You may have recognized that the story is an adaptation of the movie "Shrek." In it the princess becomes not so beautiful. Her hair loses its perfect curls, her eyes become weak, her figure plump, her nose pointed, her teeth crooked, and her face full of pimples. Actually, she doesn't change; she just appears for who she really is—warts and all. Yet, the ogre loves her.

God loves us—not because we're lovable. He loves us not because we have something to offer to Him. He loves us not because we're pretty or handsome or talented or attractive or rich. He sees us for what we really are—warts and all. Our sins are ugly, repugnant to Him. Yet He loves us, loves us so much that He died on the cross for us, not so we magically become beautiful, but so we realize how much He loves us.

That love moves us to love, to love as he does. It gives us a different picture of love than the fairy tale wedding where everyone looks beautiful. That love is a feeling, an emotion which can pass away. God's love is not so much a thing, but action. One theologian put it this way—God's love is a verb, not a noun. Love is the woman who cleans up after her ailing husband has soiled the bed. Love is the high school student who makes a sincere effort to befriend a weird classmate. Love is the man who makes the time each day to visit his mother in a nursing home. Love is the college student who puts off studying for a test to listen to a roommate whose parents are getting a divorce.

God's love moves us to be loving, not just when we look at each other at our wedding, but when we get out of bed on a cold winter's morning after a sleepless night, when the hair gets gray and the toned muscles turn to fat, when we annoy each other, when our patience is worn thin, and when we wonder, "How long can I stand this?"

So why did we do Holy Communion before the sermon? In Holy Communion we not only get to hear God say, "I love you," we get to experience it. God's love is not something for us to understand or figure out. It is for us to experience and share.

"Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Love—real love—God's love—God in action—never fails!

Prayers

P: "Lord, in Your mercy,"

C: "Hear our prayer."

The Blessing of Hands

P: Blessed are you, Holy One. You hold us in your hands. Be with us in this day. Bless our hands, that we might hold others as dearly as you hold them. Send healing to those who are ill, comfort to those who struggle, and relief to all in pain, for the sake of Jesus.

C: Amen.

ALL: Blessed be the hands that touch young lives – babies, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Blessed be the hands that embrace others with compassion.

Blessed be the hands that administer medicine, give aspirins, bandage wounds.

Blessed be the hands that prepare meals.

Blessed be the hands that wash dishes, clean floors, arrange flowers.

Blessed be the hands that anoint the sick and offer blessings.

Blessed be the hands that grow stiff with age.

Blessed be the hands that comfort the dying and have held the dead.

Blessed be the hands that capture a memory in art and poetry and song.

Blessed be the hands that guide the young.

Blessed be the hands that greet strangers.

Blessed be the hands that learn the way of justice.

Blessed be the hands that fill out applications, write papers, carry books, send e-mails.

Blessed be the hands that receive and sort information, and hands that determine budgets.

Blessed be the hands; we hold the future in these hands.

Blessed be our hands, for they are the work of your hands, O Holy One.

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: "How Wide the Love of Christ" - Hymn #535

Postlude: