

1 Corinthians 13 - October 2012 - B & G - (John15:1-12)

Intro - Love is...

We have all seen those little booklets full of sayings -- " Love Is... "

... when you become his screensaver
... the sparkle he puts in your life
... finding time for each other
... a Grandmother (Chris book)

... after the late 60s film "Love Story" -- "love is never having to say you're sorry..."

- which must be the dumbest definition ever -

But today we are going to look at what love really is, with the help of one of the most wonderful passages from the Bible.

If you remember from last week Peter was talking about spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, teaching, hospitality, administration, -- which God has given -- a gift to each one of us in the church. We talk about charismatic churches (charisma means gift in Latin) , meaning those who emphasise spiritual gifts - but we can all have spiritual gifts

And last week Peter encouraged us to think about what is our gift and how we could use it.

At the end of today's passage are listed the three most important gifts -- Faith, Hope and Love, -- with Love being the greatest.

1. Read verses 1 -- 3

St Paul knew that sometimes in the church having gifts could cause problems. What was happening in Corinth was that the people with the more outwardly showy gifts eg healing and speaking in tongues were despising the people with more ordinary gifts such as love, hope, hospitality, administration.

That can happen in the church today.

- If there are several people preaching and teaching there can be a struggle to be the best.

- Some people may feel that the gift of welcoming is not very important.

- Some may seem to be holier than others because they speak in tongues, or prophesy, or have faith to pray for the healing of others.
- Some may have the gift of hospitality but may get fed up if it is always assumed they will do this.

So Paul sets out in Corinthians Chapter 13, the supreme importance in the church of love between its members -- he even goes as far as to say that if he gave away all his possessions or sacrificed himself, it would be worth nothing without love.

But this is not a woolly kind of emotional romantic love, but a very active kind of love

2. Read v4-7

Notice that there are quite a few verbs in this - rejoices, protects, hopes, trusts, - love is about action (*not emotion*). Love is all about doing or not doing things in certain ways. This passage is all written in the Greek present continuous tense, - meaning actions and attitudes which have become habitual - we should always behave in this way. It sounds so obvious, but these habits are most difficult to cultivate.

In our church community -

Are we able to forget hurtful things that others have said or done? Can we learn to start over again? Are we patient with the way others do things? Do we always want what is best for them? Do we secretly think we are better Christians? Do we persevere when things get tough?

But this is not only the way we should behave towards one another in church but in all our relationships --

Verse 4 "*Love is patient*" -- How do you react, when the learner driver in front of you stalls and the lights are on green?

Verse 6 "*Love does not delight in evil*" -- do you delight in the fall from grace of Jimmy Saville, or does it sadden you? (Some of our newspapers take great delight in the evil of others- the Church times writer says " I always thought Jimmy Savile was a bit creepy")

Verse 7 -- do you protect, trust, hope and persevere with your family? Do you encourage them and keep no record of their wrongs? Do you find yourself easily angered?

3. Why is love is so important (8 -- 13)

Paul talks about our present life in terms of being a child who can't understand clearly yet - or a reflection in an imperfect mirror (mirrors in his time were not very good) - but there is a time after death when we will see clearly

The reason why faith, hope and love are so important is that they are the only permanent gifts.

All our religious cleverness will not matter when we see God face to face. We will then know what we struggle to work out from the Bible today. We will not need prophecy or knowledge.

But the faith hope and love we have shown in this life will still remain -- That is what we take with us when we die and stand before him.
