

Adult's Message

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

We often use this passage for weddings and anniversaries. I have also used it for a few funerals. Only when it was appropriate to the life we were celebrating. The context of this passage has changed and been forgotten over the past two thousand years. The original purpose of this text was to admonish the Corinthians and give them heck. Paul does this all while talking about love. I recon it is like being told off so beautifully that you do not realize that you have been told off. Paul is admonishing the Corinthians with love and they do not know they have been admonished and put in their place.

Paul can see problems with this community in the near future. The Corinthian church is gathered around Christ but they have cliques in their ranks. People are gathering around some people in the community that have gifts. Paul lists these gifts that are present in the Corinthian church: tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith and charity. Those with these gifts have forgotten who has given them these gifts. These people have become proud and boastful because of these gifts from God. Paul warns them that these gifts will either fail or dry up with time. The gift that lasts and does not fail is love.

Love is the foundation of the Christian community. That those with the other gifts should use them with love. Verses 8-13 are summed up this way, the gifts of the Spirit, wonderful as they are, are only temporary. They are for this age while we are still children. Yet love continues into the age that is to come. It is eternal, complete and fulfilling.

The Holy Spirit who gives these gifts is not a spirit of confusion or division. This is what Paul is trying to nip in the bud before it grows and becomes unmanageable. This is why he admonishes them with his poem about love. That love is far superior to any of the gifts in the Corinthian church. Paul is trying to make those with gifts to be team players and not lone wolves. If these people with gifts were not addressed they could divide the community with their gifts and cults of personality would arise. While the gospel of Jesus Christ gets lost in the mix or completely forgotten. Paul has his work cut out for himself.

Fortunately the Holy Spirit guided the Church in Corinth with Paul's teaching and preaching. Love would be the gift that would unite the church. It is the strongest force on the planet empowering churches to grow and carry on. Things have not changed much since Paul's time in Corinth. Situations are the same sometimes. It is whether we choose to learn from the past. Many times the only things that change are the dates in history. People are people.

God Bless and have a great long weekend, Pastor D