

LOVE'S DELIGHTS

1 Corinthians 13:6

Sermon for Peace Church

November 9, 2008

PURPOSE – To teach people the delights and detests of love in the context of a heart growing in eternal life.

MAIN IDEA – The heart grows alive in love as we refuse to delight in evil, but rejoice with the truth – known ultimately in Jesus Christ.

I. INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 13 – READ

1. The most practical of all reasons calls us to take seriously these Lessons in Love.

1 John 4 – *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. And in this way, love is MADE COMPLETE among us – so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment – because in this world we are like Him.*”

There's the REASON!

- One day we shall each meet Love face to face – pure, holy, perfect love – and we will be ASSESSED by love – judged. Our goal on that day is to hear God say: “I know you ... You're like me ... Love has begun to be made complete in you! ... We're family ... Come – to continue love's journey, unencumbered by sin!”

So faith, hope, love abide ... and the greatest of LOVE REMAINS

So on that day, it's not ultimately about words, knowledge, 4 spiritual laws, doctrines or prayers of decision ... The SUBSTANCE of eternal life is “faith expressing itself in love.”(Gal. 5:6)

Has it begun in you?

2. *“Is your love growing?”*, asks Francis Frangipane in his book on spiritual warfare. *“Is it becoming softer? Brighter? More daring and more visible? ... Or is it becoming more discriminating, more calculating, less vulnerable and less available?”*

= great questions ... the questions of eternity ... “Am I growing more available as a person – or less? More vulnerable, or less?”

This is a very important issue, for your Christianity is only as REAL as your love is. A measurable decrease in your ability to love is evidence that a stronghold of COLD LOVE is developing in you."

(i) That phrase (Cold Love) is drawn from Jesus' teachings on the LAST DAYS when He states, "Because of the increase in wickedness, the love of most will grow cold." (Mt. 24)

= retracted, individualized, isolated (just me & my screen)

- Hearts become self-protected, self-concerned, shrinking, ... cold

... But, Jesus continues, "he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

= they are those whose love is "HEATING UP" in this age – where hearts are getting bigger, broader, brighter ... more daring, more available.

THAT IS SALVATION!

A. The truly saved are those with hearts AFLAME in the God who is love ...

... therefore *your Christianity is as real as your love is!*

3. Today's descriptions of love help us to feed that flame and "stand firm against the increase of wickedness" in our day.

(i) They are a COUPLET:

LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL (un-"righteousness", sin, iniquity (KJV), things "wrong" ... LOVE REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH

What does that look like? ... Love does not delight in evil

II. LOVE DOES NOT DELIGHT IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

1. Let me begin with an extreme example: A plane is hi-jacked, transformed into a bomb by maniacs on a suicide mission, strikes a twin tower, thousands are killed ... and there's DANCING on the streets in certain parts of the Middle East.

... Love does not delight in evil ... Love hates evil ... love grieves wrong

2. David Bast writes, "A proud rich man in your community becomes crippled with an incurable disease. Isn't there a certain grim satisfaction that he will not be able to fully enjoy the money you never had? A tree falls on the new car of your unfriendly neighbor – the car that he has just been bragging on to everyone – and a smirk forms your lips. Your running rival has been bettering you in competition until an injury stops her. Your toughest business competitor

experiences a sudden reversal that helps you immensely. A pastor in another church, a man you have secretly envied because he is more successful than you, is disgraced by a sex scandal and forced to resign. What do you feel deep down? Nothing but sorrow?"

... Love does not delight in evil

3. Last weekend – Oct. 31 – a lot of people took the opportunity to celebrate evil – Halloween seems to get creepier every year.

Delighting in unrighteousness is a STAPLE of the ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY.

HORROR movies, violence, death invite us to delight in evil ... to be ENTERTAINED BY IT.

4. But not just horror & violence - In an essay on "Keeping the Marriage Bed Honorable" (even if that marriage bed is a ways into the future), Douglas Wilson writes:

QUOTE – pp. 110-111 – "Reforming Marriage"

5. That's what this phrase is all about – PROTECTING THE HEART.

Love does not delight in unrighteousness so the heart can remain PURE & RESPONSIVE to the flesh & blood people in our life ... (or our life's future).

- (i) Violence, horror, skin-flicks DESENSITIZE the heart
- (ii) Skin flicks leads us to treat others as objects – to use people for our personal pleasure / consumption.

It creates fantasy lives which are far from that particular person – right in front of you.

Instead of love becoming "softer & brighter" to that spouse God has brought you (or WILL BRING YOU), your heart becomes "less available" (using Frangipane's terms).

So love does not delight in evil or sin. When Paul writes in Romans 12:9 that "Love must be sincere", the first thing he adds is, "Hate what is evil ... then, "cling to what is good"

... Yes, love REJOICES with the truth!

III. LOVE REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH

TRUTH is love's partner & pleasure. Love enjoys truth, delights in truth.

1. Truth and love are partners because they NEED each other.

Ephesians 4:15 – Christian living is “speaking the truth in love”

Without love, truth becomes hard and cold. Without truth, love is just WISH-WASH.

Parents discipline their children in love because they have a vision of what's true for their life.

I.e. – If you said you'd be home with the car before midnight, but roll in at 1:30, a parent who loves you will DISCIPLINE YOU – no car privileges for a month – because they have a vision of what's TRUE for you – that you be someone whose faithful to your word, responsible, trustworthy, a good steward of things entrusted to you.

(i) We love others in TRUTH. TRUTH BRINGS DIRECTION TO LOVE – They're partners!

A. Love REJOICES in the truth when, the next time out, your son does keep his word!
= that which is TRUE is growing in Him – HALLELUJAH!

A. Here's how the Bible describes life together in Christ: *“Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is Christ ... Verse 21 – “Surely you heard of Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.”*

2. That's our CORE CONVICTION as Christians - That there is TRUTH – and that it ultimately and authoritatively known in Jesus Christ.

(i) I say that because in our day (of pluralism) the issue of truth is disputed:

Can it be known? Is there really absolute truth?

University campuses today predominantly say “NO”!!!

➤ “You have your opinions ... I have mine – Whose to say which ones are better? ... Convictions are relative to each person ... There are no absolutes.”

I.e. – Washington State, this past Tuesday, decides to sanction physician-assisted suicide, like its neighbor Oregon – Is that right / wrong? true / false? – Whose to say?

- California / Florida decide to ban the sanctioning of gay marriage – true / false?

- A few years ago, Muslims & Jews take Southern Baptists to court for publishing a guide on how to pray for their conversion. That's intolerant they claim! Religious ideas are only subjective. Whose to say that your convictions are more truthful than mine? KEEP THEM TO YOURSELF!

In fact, in our day people say, "It's WRONG to say there's right & wrong (you can see how self-contradictory that is ... the fallacy of relativism). How can you say it's wrong to say there's right and wrong? That, in itself, is making a claim that there is a right & wrong!

WE ALL OPERATE AS IF THERE'S RIGHT & WRONG ... But whose to say what truth is?

3. Into that darkness, a light has shone:

Jesus addressed that question by stating: I AM THE TRUTH!

"I who fulfill God's historical covenant dealings with the Israelite nation ... I am the truth."

- The claim is audacious, radical, exclusive

(i) As C.S. Lewis states, He was either a LIAR, LUNATIC ... or maybe he really is the LORD of all Truth.

A. One event ultimately VALIDATES His claim – His historical resurrection from the dead (If it did not occur, we of all people are most to be pitied!)

But CHRIST IS RISEN = God's PUBLIC PROCLAMATION that JESUS IS His TRUTH ON EARTH ... AND ALL THINGS TRUE FIND MEANING IN HIM!

- His character – the faithful One
- His person – humans have dignity, made in the image of God
- His story & work – learning obedience, suffering to overcome wrong, dying to reveal mercy and forgiveness
- His glory to come – when we shall all be judged by His life

4. So when we say that love rejoices with the truth (that's a pretty abstract statement), but here's some of what it means:

- (i) Love rejoices in brothers & sisters standing up for God (MAP)& freedom of religious conviction against the powers of the government, even at the cost of their lives – because that's TRUTH! God is! Freedom is true. And Jesus Himself bore the same cost, as He stood up for God in His day.

- (ii) Love rejoices in the turning of the seasons. The leaves of the tree CLIMAX in beauty only to fall to the ground in death.

Thy glory, O Lord, lies slain on the heights – O how the mighty have fallen = Jesus' story

The turning of the seasons contains much truth to enter into – and rejoice with. All creation glorifies Christ because this universe was made THROUGH THE SON.

- (iii) Love rejoices when the knee is bowed to Jesus as Lord; when the Spirit grows patience in a child ... love rejoices in the truth.
- (iv) Love rejoices when a friend of mine forgives adultery committed against him – and perseveres in love. That's TRUTH; that's JESUS – *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* ... FAILURE IS NEVER FINAL – that's true! Deeply true!! Grace is in the heart of God.
- (v) Love rejoices when truth is expressed in ART – balance, proportion, young voices in harmony – 3 in One – Diversity in Unity
- (vi) Love rejoices when truth is expressed on the screen – “Remember the Titans” – We are one in Christ.
- (vii) Love rejoices when Senator McCain quells the boos at his Election Day gathering, preferring instead to honor his victorious opponent!
- (viii) Love rejoices when a man of color, from relative obscurity, rises to become the president-elect. How amazing! (Even if you disagree with some of his positions.) How true and reflective this is of THE RISING of history - God's story in Jesus Christ ... *Can anything good come out of a stable, out of Nazareth? From a Cross?*
- (ix) Love rejoices in the witness of Scripture to the Living Truth, Jesus Christ.

TRUTH IS ALL AROUND US – to be rejoiced with

- Truth which bears witness to the PERSON, the CHARACTER, the STORY, the GLORY of Jesus – God's truth on earth ... True truth!

IV. CONCLUSION

So this is how we prevent our heart from becoming COLD IN LOVE:

1. Do not delight in evil.
 - Love detests evil. It is not entertained by sin in the least.
 - For sin and evil DESENSITIZE the heart – making it cold, isolated, small.

2. Instead, love rejoices with the truth. That feeds the heart – ENLARGES IT.
 - That rejoicing is our fellowship with the Spirit of Christ.
 - For Jesus is the One who detests evil, and He IS THE TRUTH.

AMEN.