

AS WE WAIT FOR JESUS, LET US LIVE LOVING LIVES
1 Corinthians 13: 1-13; Romans 13: 8-14, text: Romans 13: 8, 11, 14
December 19, 2021

Romans 13:11 (NIV) And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

I. Meeting Jesus as Judge

A. Some people have worried that they might be caught in the wrong place doing something sinful when Jesus returns.

B. The problem with that fear is that the LORD already knows where we've been and what we've been doing.

Psalm 139:1-4 (NIV) O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

1. He knows everything any of us do.

2. The same God who inspired Paul to warn his people about evil behavior in verse 13, sexual immorality and debauchery, dissension and jealousy, is the one who saw his people doing those things.

C. He also knows the attitudes of our hearts.

1. More than even knowing why we do what we do, he knows who we truly are.

2. Some of the people in the Corinthian church wanted to build themselves up in the eyes of others, and maybe even in their own eyes.

3. But, they forgot that their lives here come to end, and they would one day meet the God who knew them through and through.

Questions:

- 1) Have I ever worried that I might meet the Lord right after I had been in the wrong place, committing a terrible sin? Why or why not?**
- 2) Does it trouble me that God knows everything I've ever done? If it does, what can I do about it?**
- 3) Does it trouble me that God knows the sins in my mind and heart? It does, what can I do about it?**

II. God's Expectation that His People Have Loving Hearts and Live Loving Life

Romans 13:8 (NIV) Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

A. After God saved the Israelites he brought them to Mount Sinai, where he gave them his law.

1. Before he gave the Ten Commandments he said, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Exodus 20:2 (NIV)

2. And then he told them that they must respond to his saving them from slavery in Egypt by obeying his law.

B. Similarly, God saved us from sin and death by sacrificing his son.

1. We must respond to his salvation by loving each other.

2. We can repay our debts to each other, but we cannot repay God for his gift of his Son.

3. So, we must respond by everyday living a life of love.

C. This text commands us to love our neighbor, but love for God and love for our neighbor go hand in hand.

1 John 4:20 (NIV) If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

D. Our text also informs us that he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

1. Obeying God's law is not simply following rules; it means truly loving God and others.

2. The rules are there to help us understand how to love.

3. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for being worried about obeying the rules, but not having true hearts of love.

Matthew 23:25 (NIV) Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

4. He said that after proclaiming in Matthew 22:37- 40 that all the commandments hang on two commandments: to love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves.

E. Everything we do must spring out of a heart of love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV) if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not 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 have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

1. Especially consider the last verse that giving everything to the poor and being burned alive, probably for your faith, means nothing without love.

2. God isn't interested in our great deeds that get noticed by others.

Matthew 6:2-4 (NIV) "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth; they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then you're Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you

3. He wants us to live our entire lives out of hearts of love, hearts that put others first.

F. 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 tells us how to express the love God expects.

1. Love is expressed by everyday patience and kindness.

2. In a world that is so impressed by the way some people put down others, love is not rude.

3. Loving people build each other up, not themselves.
4. In a world where we're taught to stick up for our rights, loving people are not angry.
5. They don't hold grudges; they forgive.
6. In a world where people twist the truth to promote themselves and their ideas, loving people rejoice in truth.
7. In a world where people like to sound like they're good people by criticizing others, loving people protect others.
8. They don't even think much about other people's faults.
9. And they always trust and hope to the bitter end that God can change the most stubborn hearts, even their own.

Questions:

- 1) Some people believe that we are saved partly by believing in Jesus and partly by obediently loving God and others; others believe that we are saved totally by believing in Jesus and that we then must show our thankfulness to God for our salvation by obediently loving him and others. Who do I think is right and why? Do I think this is an important question? Why or why not?
- 2) Some people think that if they just try to live a loving life they don't have to worry about obeying God's law. Why are they wrong?
- 3) Have I ever found myself pointing out to others the good things I do? Why is this really unimportant? Is it possible for me to do good things that in the end are meaningless to God? How? (see 1 Cor. 13:1-4)
- 4) What are some behaviors that are praised in our culture and society, that God sees as unloving?
- 5) Which of the descriptions of what love is in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 are difficult for me to practice and why?

III. How to Love as God Expects

A. Some might say that because Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves we should begin with self-love.

1. Maybe that works for some folks, but the Bible seems to say that part of our problem is that we have too much preoccupation with self.
2. Remember, love is not self-serving.
 - a. We should note that some folks try to love themselves by trying to see and proclaim how good they are.
 - b. And it often results in their being angry others for not treating them as the good people they think they are.

B. Paul, instead, tells us to "clothe ourselves with Christ."

1. To clothe ourselves with Christ we must first remember how much we are loved by him and by our heavenly Father, who sacrificed him to save us.

John 15:12 (NIV) My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

2. If we truly desire to love other flawed people, we must remember how much God loves us despite all our sins and flaws.
3. The Apostle Paul, who wrote our scripture, also wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15:

1 Timothy 1:15 (NIV) Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.

4. Seeing ourselves as we are before God, let us pray for the power of Spirit to say, "Help me be loving to others as Christ is loving to me."
5. And we say that not because those love are worthy, but because we are so thankful to our Lord for loving unworthy us.

C. Romans 13:11 is not about judgment, but about salvation

Romans 13:11 (NIV) And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

1. When Jesus comes back our salvation will be complete, and we will be the loving people Jesus saved us to be.
2. It's not easy to put on Christ and love like him, but our struggles to love unlovable people may be the way in which God is sandblasting us, so that someday we can be truly loveable and loving.
3. And perhaps he can use our attempts to love to help others know his love and become loveable and loving too.

Colossians 1:27 (NIV) To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Questions:

- 1) Does God expect me to love myself? How do I know that? (What does the second great commandment found in Matthew 22: 39 say?) If I'm struggling to love myself, what should I do about it? But, why does loving myself not necessarily help me to love others better?
- 2) As I attempt to love those who are unlovable, why is it necessary for me to reflect on how God loved and saved unlovable me? Why did Paul call himself the worst of sinners? Why might I also fit in that category? How does that motivate me to love people who aren't very nice? Why does loving someone not mean that I must put up with their abusing me? Why is putting up with abuse other sinful behavior on the part of others a very unloving thing to do? Who sees their sin and will condemn them for it?
- 3) How is the love I have and show one of the best ways I put on Christ and show him to the world? How is sharing Christ with others a genuine act of love? How can I share Christ with others using more than just words?
- 4) How can the Lord help me to become more like him by bringing difficult and unlovable people into my life?