

Hebrews 13 “the Way of Love”

Proposition: Love is a Jesus resourced lifestyle that impacts every area of Christian living.

I have heard such good feedback about Treena’s ministry last week. None of it surprises me but it’s been really encouraging to hear. I often have folk offer to come and preach at our church but... I really like the many biblically sound preachers that we have. We are blessed.

Treena preached on the first half of Hebrews 12.

If you stand back and look at the whole flow of this letter there is a real structure to these last three chapters. After all the theology about High priests and courts and sacrifices and Jesus being the perfect and final revelation of God’s will the last three chapters get real practical.

Chapter 11 Talked about the walk of faith.

Chapter 12 The wisdom of hope. That is even when we are receiving Godly discipline that gives us hope because it means He loves us and is at work in us.

Chapter 13 The Way of Love.

I see faith, hope and love in these last three chapters and the greatest of these is ... love.

¹Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord's followers should.

1. Love flows in God’s family.

This church is not told to try to demonstrate love, or prove to the world that they have unity, or to strive for love in the church. It’s just there as a gift from God and they are just encouraged to just let it flow, let it keep on happening. You don’t need special services or declarations, we don’t need labels or events, and we are Christians and so just let it flow naturally. Just celebrate what God has already given us.

2. Love shows itself to strangers.

²Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it.

Showing hospitality is a dying ministry in the modern world but ... its one of the best way to make friends and show that you really care for others. Are your potential guest angels? It’s possible but recognise this; it’s very unlikely that that homeless hitchhiker you just picked up or that unshaven unwashed person you have just invited in is an angel. We should love them all but when angels appear to people in the bible as they did to Abraham outside his tent, you immediately recognise that they are someone unique, special, holy. You may not know they are angels but their presence will have a godly impact on you and I think that they will always look pretty impressive and people are always being told off in the bible for worshipping angels.

3. Love cares about those who are suffering Vs3

Remember the Lord's people who are in jail and be concerned for them. Don't forget those who are suffering, but imagine that you are there with them.

Then we read on that

4. Love expresses itself in a faithful marriage sexually

⁴Have respect for marriage. Always be faithful to your partner, because God will punish anyone who is immoral or unfaithful in marriage.

Sexual intimacy in marriage is a gift that a husband and wife are meant to choose to give to each other continually. They are not to withhold that gift from each other.

My logic and all the marriage counselling books tell me that a husband and wife will enjoy good intimacy if he has met her needs and she has met his needs first. That kind of makes sense to me but... the pattern for marriage in the book of Genesis is quite the opposite. It says that a man or woman should leave their prior relationship to their mother and father, cleave to each other sexually and then God will weave their lives together making them one flesh.

Our culture and my mind tells me that it should be leave, then weave – that is form a closeness/unity then cleave sexually. I do not believe that there are any mistakes or errors in the bible, even in the order that things are written.

In marriage giving to each other sexually helps build unity. In fact we read in the bible that when we are united with our wives we become one spiritually with them. The book of proverbs says that if you join yourself sexually to someone you are not married to you damage their soul and bring harm to yourself.

In marriage it helps build the unity, outside of marriage it rips at a person's soul causing them to get messed up emotionally.

My 5'2.5 inch mum shocked me a week before my wedding. She took me aside and said Russell I want to give you an important insight into marriage. My mum was an elder then, an ex-missionary, an extremely Godly person and I expected her to say; listen son pray each day with Juliette or let love cover over a multitude of sins. You know what she actually said to me that day? She said "Russell make sure that you always have lots of sex together even when you are hurting, because it heals and it helps." "Oooh mum – I wasn't expecting that". But I think she is right. In marriage keep giving yourselves to each other very often and that helps create the oneness and unity that the Bible speaks of. In fact I was thinking this week. For our generation the big thing is communication, but thinking about what mum said and the biblical pattern when couples are struggling maybe there should be a lot less talk and a lot more cleaving.

Always be faithful to your partner, because God will punish anyone who is immoral (that is has sex outside of marriage) or unfaithful in marriage.

Now that is pretty straight forward except that Jesus said that if you consider having sex with someone you are not married to you commit adultery in your heart. What that means is if you

fantasize over porn, or a miles an Boone book, or a soap opera or as you flirt with your workmate. That is sin also and there will be some very real consequences to that sin. It will damage your marriage severely and you will face God's judgement.

5. Love shows itself by being content and not greedy

⁵*Don't fall in love with money. Be satisfied with what you have. The Lord has promised that he will not leave us or desert us. ⁶That should make you feel like saying, "The Lord helps me! Why should I be afraid of what people can do to me?"*

I think that if you work hard and can pay cash for a posh car and flash stuff that's great, you have earned it. But if you have to have it now and you are willing to borrow money, or buying things on credit to be happy and feel secure you are just like the unbeliever. Our security comes from the Lord not stuff. You are close to Jesus. You aren't going to think oh she might think I look poor or he might look down on me because my car is a pile of junk. No if you are close to Jesus, secure in relationship to Him, you really won't care what others think or what they might say to you or about you. To the degree that I realize that the Lord is with me, to the degree that I can enjoy his fellowship intimately is the degree that I can be content at any given moment. If I am in love with the Lord and trusting in Him I will not be greedy and buying things on credit and wishing I had stuff now. I will be content.

6. Love shows itself by being respectful to Spiritual leaders

⁷*Don't forget about your leaders who taught you God's message. Remember what kind of lives they lived and try to have faith like theirs.*

Every one of us has mentors, leaders, parents, people in our lives who teach us the Word. They explain to us not only that Christians should respect those in leadership in the family and in the church and in the community but why we should be respectful by using the stories in the Bible.

One observation I have made about teenagers is this.

If mum and dad show respect to their parents and to the church leaders and to civic leaders, if there is a culture of respect and honour in the family those teenagers are far less likely to be rebellious and rude at home.

7. Love shows that its real source is Jesus

⁸*Jesus Christ never changes! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Now where have I heard that before?

Love flows in fellowship, it cares about strangers and the suffering, it expresses itself in marriage, it is content and not greedy, it respects those that teach us the Word and ... Jesus is the source of it all. And He is here, and He is always with us, and He can cause real love to flow through all our lives continually in all those ways.

⁹*Don't be fooled by any kind of strange teachings. It is better to receive strength from God's undeserved kindness than to depend on certain foods. After all, these foods don't really help the*

people who eat them. ¹⁰But we have an altar where even the priests who serve in the place of worship have no right to eat.

Put simply, don't add to grace, don't think you need to be vegan or light special candles or incense or do rituals and things to walk with the Lord, just focus your life on God's undeserved kindness, grace, He is far better to each of us than any of us deserve. And in addition to that though we don't have an altar in a temple to sacrifice animals we do have an altar, a special place and we will see what that is shortly.

¹¹After the high priest offers the blood of animals as a sin offering, the bodies of those animals are burned outside the camp. ¹²Jesus himself suffered outside the city gate, so that his blood would make people holy. ¹³That's why we should go outside the camp to Jesus and share in his disgrace. ¹⁴On this earth we don't have a city that lasts forever, but we are waiting for such a city.

Leviticus 16 and Exodus 29 will tell you that always when there was an animal sacrifice the bodies of those animals were burned outside the tabernacle or outside the temple or outside the city. And where was Jesus crucified and killed, not in Jerusalem but outside the city gates on a hill called Golgotha.

Now as followers of Jesus we don't have a holy city or a holy place or a holy building or an altar to make sacrifices on but we do have an altar that we carry with us wherever we go.

¹⁵Our sacrifice is to keep offering praise to God in the name of Jesus. ¹⁶But don't forget to help others and to share your possessions with them. This too is like offering a sacrifice that pleases God.

8. We show our love for God when we offer the sacrifice of praise and the sacrifice of service.

¹⁵Our sacrifice is to keep offering praise to God in the name of Jesus. ¹⁶But don't forget to help others and to share your possessions with them. This too is like offering a sacrifice that pleases God.

Here is the altar we do have. And we carry it wherever we go, to work, to mow the lawns, while we are doing the dishes, while we are at church. We can offer God two things that really minister to Him and please His heart. When we are tired and life is getting to us and the kids are getting grumpy and we don't feel like giving thanks, because we know that God will come through for us eventually and that He is always with us no matter what we feel. That is the best time to praise Him. Praise given to him by faith when we don't feel like giving thanks is a sacrifice that really pleases the Father's heart.

Feelings change from day to day depending on the weather, what we just ate, how the rugby is going, how many bills we found in the letter box. A whole heap of things effect our feelings but

YOU AND I HAVE TO LEARN TO WALK BY FAITH AND NOT BY FEELING

God is honoured and blessed when you are feeling tired and stressed out and you can't feel His presence so well and yet you choose to praise Him wherever you are. That's a sacrifice of praise and it ministers to the Lord.

Secondly when you serve other people in His name especially other Christians that too is a sacrifice that the Lord loves. Well how does that work?

Parents what effect does it have on you when you hear one of your children compliment or thank or bless another one of your kids? When you see one of them without any prompting from you do something really thoughtful for their sister or brother, what effect does that have on you?

The truth is you feel proud, happy, blessed and so does your Father in heaven when you take your focus off yourself and you serve other people.

Your service to them blessed the heart of the Father in heaven.

Vs 7 and 17 are basically exposing the same theme. Respect your leaders because they will be judged by how well they take care of your spiritual needs and so it doesn't help anyone to give them a hard time.

¹⁷Obey your leaders and do what they say. They are watching over you, and they must answer to God. So don't make them sad as they do their work. Make them happy. Otherwise, they won't be able to help you at all.

On the second week in December we are going to look at vs 18-20 as we conclude our study in Hebrews. These verses are inspiring us to understand how the blood of Jesus has the power to make us perfect.

Faith, Hope and Love. This chapter shows us what love looks like in a Christian community. It also tells us that the source of that love is the One who never changes and is always with us. And it concludes by telling us if we really want to love God back, to really please His heart then, when we are dry spiritually and life is knocking us for six, then because we know He is with us and will come through for us, then is the best time to worship and to offer Him a sacrifice of praise.

If we want to love Him back and bring Him joy; then family we should take every opportunity to serve others and especially those that belong to the household of God.