

“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love... but the greatest of these is love.” 1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

We all know this one, right? I have to confess that I really don't like it. Perhaps it's better to say I'm tired of hearing it, as being a pastor I've been asked countless times to preach on this passage at weddings. I suspect I have preached on "the greatest of these is love" more than any other passage in the Bible. Yes, "familiarity breeds contempt" (Mark Twain), but maybe my struggle is that the message was originally intended for the larger faith community and not couples getting married. The message to the whole Christian community is simple: Faith and hope are important gifts but unless they are motivated by and shared with and through love, they have no value or may even be negative like a "noisy gong or a clanging symbol" (1 Corinthians 13:1). Faith can "move mountains" and hope can "endure all things" but without love each is too often about me and not the other, the neighbor, the community. We love, because God first loved us. In other words, the gift of God's love is exactly that, a gift which is to be shared with others and for others.

Reflection Questions:

- How do you or where have you witnessed God's love in the world? In your life?
- Where have you re-gifted God's gift of love to others?
- When you first think of the word "love", do you think first of those who have impacted and loved you, or do you think of those you love or have loved?

Family Activity:

Discuss what you feel the difference is between faith, hope and love. Why is love the most important? Write the words "love" "hope" and "faith" on square pieces of paper. Decorate them to look like wrapped presents. Post them where everyone can see them every day. When guests ask, share what you have reflected upon.

Teenage Activity:

Make the word "love" your screen saver (great images on Pinterest). Remember: you are that same gift of love to re-gift to others. You choose how every day.

Adult Activity:

Reflect on faith, hope and love and how they impact your life. Why do you think love is greatest? How does love of your community and neighbor impact your life? Finish this phrase and how it applies in your life: "Love is..." Keep it handy so that you can regularly reflect and act on it.

Prayer:

Lord, may I not be a noisy gong or a clanging symbol, but help me to grow in your gift of love and re-gift it to your world by...