**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon

 *Ekklesia Series*

 *God’s Love Empowers*

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

May 12th In the Year of Our Lord 2019

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS quoted)

Psalm 130:3 ~ Lord, if you kept an account of iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

Psalm 86:5 ~ For you, Lord, are kind and ready to forgive, abounding in faithful love to all who call on you.

 Last Sunday, we highlighted the core of God’s being, that is, love. Love is the purpose and driving force in which God operates. We focused on 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4 which details God’s character to ~~be~~ love. We considered the love described in 1 Corinthians 13 to belong to God. The love described by Paul is a perfect love that we strive to emulate. We have the challenge to wake every morning and face the world challenges with love. We are not fully where we will be spiritually. We are all on our way. So, we are in an active pursuit, we are in an on-the-job training course of living life with God’s love running through are hearts, minds, bodies and spirits. We have the greatest of gifts, if we only humble ourselves to God.

 So, we recognize that the sustaining power of God’s Church through the ages is love. John 3:16 carries right through every human age. ‘For God so loved the world’. . . words that ring throughout history. Just think about God’s Word and the people that read the same words you read. We are all tied together in a seamless spiritual lineage through God’s Word. Every world leader, at least in Western civilization, has most likely read John 3:16. They may have read about God’s great love as a child or a teen or an adult, but they have read about God’s love. God does not go without notice. Love is the tie that binds all humanity together. Paul declares that if we do not have love, we have nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,

but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

 2 If I have *the gift of* prophecy,

and know all mysteries and all knowledge;

and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,

but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*,

and if I surrender my body to be burned,

**but do not have love, it profits me nothing.**

4 Love is patient, love is kind

 *and* is not jealous;

 love does not brag

*and* is not arrogant,

5 does not act unbecomingly;

it does not seek its own,

is not provoked,

does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,

6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness,

but rejoices with the truth;

7 bears all things, believes all things,

 hopes all things, endures all things.

 8 Love never fails;

but if *there are gifts of* prophecy, they will be done away;

if *there are* tongues, they will cease;

if *there is* knowledge, it will be done away.

 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part;

 10 but when the perfect comes, [at the 2nd Coming]

the partial will be done away.

 11 When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face;

now I know in part, but then I will know fully

just as I also have been fully known.

13 But now faith, hope, **love**, abide these three;

 but the **greatest of these is love**.

Several passages of Scripture detail the importance of love: love for God and for our neighbor or love as the catalyst in carrying-out ministry. God has designated love as the binding power in our relationships. Under the umbrella of God’s love, the Church grows and moves forward in people’s lives. Using Scripture lets us see what God’s love accomplishes in the creation.

1. We are called to love God with all our heart and soul, and, with this pursuit, we stay away from false beliefs.

Deut.13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

1. Love is tied to God’s covenant. The love of God gives us the ability to obey God’s voice and stay close to Him for our entire life, thus living in the place God has planned for us to live.

KJV Deut. 30:20 That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, *and* that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

KJV 1 Jn. 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

NAU Neh. 1:5 I said, "I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

NAU 1 Jn. 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

1. God’s love directs our hearts.

KJV 2 Thess. 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

1. God’s love is not fearful.

KJV 2 Tim. 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear;

but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

1. Love ministers to others.

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. (Heb. 6:10 NAU)

1. Love demonstrates our devotion to others.

KJV 1 Jn. 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

1. Love leads us to God’s mercy.

KJV Jude 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

1. Love empowers us to take care of those who are not like us.

 NAU Lev. 19:34 'The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

1. Love protects us from false teachings.

NAU Deut. 13:3 You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

1. Love and justice are intrinsically/fundamentally tied together.

NAU Lk. 11:42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every *kind of* garden herb, and *yet* disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

1. The Love of God is directly tied to our prayer life.

NAU Rom. 15:30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

1. For those who love God, He has prepared great things for us to see and hear. Love opens our eyes. Conversely, hate & hard feelings close our eyes.

NAU 1 Cor. 2:9 but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

1. God is the one who teaches us to love.

NAU 1 Thess. 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

1. God’s love is designed to grow in our hearts.

NAU 2 Thess. 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater;

1. Love is from God and separates us from the rest of the word. NAU 1 Jn. 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
2. Love gives us patience to wait for good things God has instore for us and is directly tied to eternal life.

NAU Jude 1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

 With the love for God and their neighbor, people in history have given their lives and have gone beyond what a normal person would go to get the Word of God in front of the eyes of the common person. These men knew that their work would live beyond their days. Like Abel. . .

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. (Heb. 11:4 NAU)

**John Wycliffe** was the most famous priest of his day. His learning was immense. He had been a leading scholar at Oxford and a chaplain to the King of England. More to the point, he spoke boldly against the errors of the popes, the organizational hierarchy of the Roman Church, and the corruption of the clergy in his day. He criticized not only the organization of the medieval church but its theology as well and argued for a return to the Scriptures. Pastors should live lives of simplicity and holiness, he taught, shepherding their flocks (people)--not plundering them.

If the people in England were to know the truth, Wycliffe reasoned that they must have the Word of God in their own language. Under his direction, the [**Bible**](https://www.biblestudytools.com/) was translated into English for the first time, although the job was not completed by his associates until 1395, eleven years after his death. Repeatedly condemned and burned by church authorities, copies of Wycliffe's Bible continued in use for over a century, until printed Bibles took their place. This work greatly influenced William Tyndale who made the first printed translation of the New Testament into English. <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1201-1500/john-wycliffe-on-his-death-bed-11629868.html>

**John Hus ~** One of Wycliffe’s followers, John Hus, actively promoted Wycliffe’s ideas: that people should be permitted to read the Bible in their own language, and they should oppose the tyranny of the Roman church that threatened anyone possessing a non-Latin Bible with execution. Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, with Wycliffe’s manuscript Bibles used as kindling for the fire. The last words of John Hus were that,*“in 100 years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed.”* Almost exactly 100 years later, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 Theses of Contention (a list of 95 issues of heretical theology and crimes of the Roman Catholic Church) onto the church door at Wittenberg. The prophecy of Hus had come true!

**John Hus** (a.k.a. Jan Huss) was a religious thinker and reformer, born in Southern Bohemia in 1369. He initiated a reform movement based on the ideas of John Wycliffe. His followers became known as Hussites. The Catholic Church did not condone such uprisings, and Hus was excommunicated in 1411 and burned at the stake in Constance on July 6, 1415, having been condemned by the Council of Constance, in an unfair trial. <https://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/john-hus.html>

**William Tyndale**  "was strangled to death while tied at the stake, and then his dead body was burned". His final **words**, spoken "at the stake with a fervent zeal, and a loud voice", were reported as "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes."

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Tyndale>

 From 1384 to 1536, all three of these men were directed by God to get His Word into the language of the common person. Two were burned at the stake, and the one who died of a stroke, the State Church dug-up his bones later and burned them. Despite being victims of the deadly sins of those who claimed to be Christian, these devout men of faith, whose names have been recorded in history, gave their lives in order to bring God’s Word forward through history. They humbled themselves to a power and a cause that was greater than they were. Their lives served God’s purpose to an eternal end. They accepted their assignments to the end of their lives. They believed with all their hearts that mankind was better-off possessing the Word of God and reading God’s Word for themselves.

Going back over the multiple applications of “Love”, we see that love is the primary mover in the world. This is because God is love (1 John 4).

 In the New Testament, “Love” is the most used “verb” used to describe the character of a relationship.

What is going on with a relationship? What is the nature of a relationship?

Agapao 143 I love, cherish, show love, long for

Agape 116 Love, love feast

Agapetos 61 Beloved, dear

 320

In whole Biblical text: 384 love

 70 loves

 4 Loving

 95 loved

 553

 This observation about God’s Love and its application to the Creation is paramount in moving the Church through time. If God’s love is not present in a group of people then they do not belong to God. For God, by Biblical definition, is love. Where there isn’t any love, God is not being received

**Romans 5:5-8** 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

**Romans 15:30** Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the **love of the Spirit**, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

**2 Corinthians 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, **and the love of God,** and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

**1 Corinthians 4:20-21** 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness? 21 But the **fruit of the Spirit is love,** joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Galatians 5:22-23**  22 But the **fruit of the Spirit is love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

**Philippians 2:1** Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, **if there is any consolation of love,** if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, **maintaining the same love**, **united in spirit, intent on one purpose**

**This is the one purpose . . .**

**Philippians 2:3-8** **3** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

 **4** do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

 **5** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

 **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

 **7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

 **8** Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

**Colossians 1:7-8** 7 just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, 8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.

**2 Timothy 1:5-8** 5 or I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. 6 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

 We have looked at love intently and with purpose and with a wanting to understand the power of God and the application of God’s power, which first and foremost is His love. Without love, nothing would be accomplished. The whole redemption of humanity rests upon God extending Himself in love.

 With the same intent that God has for His love that resides in us, we are to broadcast to others this redeeming love. We already have God’s Word that defines love. 1 Corinthians 13 is the best biblical text we have to identify who God is and what His intent is for mankind. The sad reality is that so many people, in fact multitudes of people, have not surrendered to God’s Holy Spirit conviction, and they have lived in the world never experiencing God’s love. This is a beyond disappointing. The creative intent of God is for us to experience love.

Last Sunday, we examined the fact that God’s declarative to us is that He is love and He created the world with people in order for us to experience love, the greatest gift, the greatest attribute of life. There isn’t any life without love.

With God’s love-presence in us, we live our lives at the same time evil events are happening all around us. The whole creation moans to be redeemed.

**2 Corinthians 5:2** Indeed, we groan in this tent, desiring to put on our heavenly dwelling,

**Mark 16:15** Then he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

**2 Corinthians 5:4** Indeed, we groan while we are in this tent, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

Paul gives a witness from God about the fall condition of the world when he writes to the Believers in Rome.

**Romans 8:9-24** 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh-- 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

 **[ACKNOLEDGEMENT Of WORLD CONDITIONS]** **18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

 **20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope**

 **21 that the creation itself also will be set free** from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

 **22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.**  23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?

 When God created the world with life to be lived, as His original intent, He created a choice for or against Him. God’s original intent was that the world be good. God sets the standards for what “Good is.” The crowning power of God’s intent is love. Since God is love and love is a choice, the creation also has the choice for the opposite of God’s love. This too, God created. Genesis 2:17 is the detailed account of God giving Adam a choice.

The opposite of love is no love, no compassion, and no forgiveness. All of this is realized when Adam chose to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God afforded mankind a choice and man took the choice. With this choice, the flood gates were opened to pride, selfishness, me first, arrogance, unforgiveness, hate and rebellion.

With this free-will-choice, people have access to the full range of human behavior and, at the same time, have access to God’s full redemptive power and plan for their lives. Thus, due to fallen man’s exercise of free-will-choice, pain and suffering is unleashed.

 God allowed people to make their own choices. God’s natural law, like gravity, is devastating if you do not respect its power. The law of sin is powerful. Paul declares in Romans 7 he loses to the power of the law of sin and death. Then in Romans 8, Paul declares victory by accessing the one power greater than the law of sin and death.

**Romans 8:1-2 1** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

What is unfortunate are those who go against God’s “good.”

**Exodus 34:7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."**

**Job 21:19 God reserves a person's punishment for his children. Let God repay the person himself, so that he may know it.**

**Numbers 14:33 Your children will be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years and bear the penalty for your acts of unfaithfulness until all your corpses lie scattered in the wilderness.**

**Jeremiah 32:18 You show faithful love to thousands but lay the fathers' iniquity on their sons' laps after them, great and mighty God whose name is the Lord of Armies,**

**2 Corinthians 5:1-4 1** For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed **in this house we groan**, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, **who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.**

 So, God’s love preserves to the end of our lives and to the end of the age and into eternity.

**Proverbs 24:16** For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity.

**Daniel 9:4** I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: Ah, Lord the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps his gracious covenant with those who love him and keep his commands

**Micah 7:18** Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity and passing over rebellion for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not hold on to his anger forever because he delights in faithful love.