

“Have Fervent Love”

1 Peter 4:8

May 24, 2020

SERMON 1916

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The sermon text is from 1 Peter 4:8, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ (Prov 10:12)”

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

For forty days our Lord showed Himself to the Apostles as a proof of His resurrection. Jesus promised that He would send His Holy Spirit upon them to help them to testify concerning the gospel message of the forgiveness of sins to be received by faith. The Apostles did testify concerning Jesus Christ. And then in accordance with Jesus’ words, the church leaders excommunicated them from the synagogues and they sought to kill the Apostles. Most of them suffered a martyr’s death.

From these faithful apostles, we have received the apostolic Word. We have learned about our sins and the wrath of God. We have learned about the Savior, who took away God’s wrath, which we deserved, and gave to us the promise of forgiveness of sins through faith. Before ascending to heaven our Lord said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

We believe and are baptized, and thus we are reckoned as Christians. From the Apostles’ teaching, we know that salvation is not earned by good works. We put our faith in the death and resurrection of Christ for our salvation. It does not bother us when others accuse us of falsehood. We are not troubled by those who do not accept the clear teachings of the Christian faith. The Spirit of truth testifies of Jesus. Our goal is, as St. Peter says, “in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” If we are reproached for the name of Christ, then we are blessed.

Today’s sermon addresses our Christian life after we have that sure and certain hope of eternal life. St. Peter in today’s Epistle wants us to know how a Christian is to live. Our Lord has ascended and will return in the same way, visibly at the end of the world. Until then, **how is the baptized and believing Christian to live?** Today we learn that the Christian has three things with which to concern himself.

First, give serious attention to the Word of God and prayer. Verse 7 says, “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.” Once a Christian has come to faith in Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Word of God, he never leaves the Word of God behind as if he were moving on to other things. The Christian never graduates from hearing the Word of God to some other endeavor. St. Paul exhorts the believers in the book of Hebrews and says, “Do not give up meeting together, as is the manner of some.” St. Paul calls the Galatians foolish, for beginning by hearing the word of faith, but then leaving it behind to do works of the law (Gal 3:1-3). And finally, our Lord praised Mary who sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His Word when

Martha wanted her to put other things first. Jesus said, "But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken from her" (Lk 10:42).

One more thing needs to be said. Our Lord doesn't just want us around his Word, but He desires that we give the content of His Word serious attention. We don't do silly things in our Divine Service. We don't play around or behave as if this were a pep rally or a concert. Nevertheless, that means that God's Service requires you to pay attention or take notes or get enough sleep if you are going to be watchful in your prayers. Clear out the distractions and think about the words of the hymns and the prayers. Take the bulletin home and read the words again.

Second, in our life toward others, there is one thing which should guide the Christian in his life. It is love, fervent love toward his fellow man. Verse 8 says, "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins' (Prov 10:12)." Love is the virtue by which we show our Christian faith to our neighbor. Most everyone remembers 1 Corinthians 13 because it is often chosen as a marriage service text. Nevertheless, **the connection between God's love is shown most clearly in 1 John 4:7-21.**

--St. John directs born again believers to love. 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."

--Next John says in verse 19, "We love Him because He first loved us." The Christian love of our neighbor is motivated in us, because we have received God's love.

--And finally, St. John speaks of the impossibility of a love-less Christian. Verse 20, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar;"

At the beginning of this sermon I spoke of the Apostles who were excommunicated as they were thrown out of the synagogues. I also mentioned that they almost all of them were mistreated and killed. Are we called to love our enemies? Why, yes, we are. But don't think that Christian love is only for unbelievers or for those who persecute the faith.

St. Peter directs us to "love one another," that is, we are to love our fellow Christians! Furthermore, Peter is not satisfied that we simply have love, as if our love could be given somewhat reluctantly. At the top of the list is fervent love. He says, "**And above all things have fervent love for one another....**" Of course, a Christian is do good works of thankfulness, but St. Peter makes love of the neighbor to be the motivation for every good work. Above all things, there is to be an intense and passionate love toward the fellow believer.

You might say that makes sense. Those on the outside of the church may be either indifferent or hateful toward believers and we are supposed to love them. However, for those who are inside the church and who share our beliefs and love for the Word, we should have fervent love. That may be true, but **St. Peter in verse 8 seems to have something else in mind.** St. Peter cites an Old Testament passage from Proverbs 10:12 as applicable to believers. Proverbs 10:12 says, "love will cover a multitude of sins." The love which we are to show toward our fellow believer involves forgiving sins. What? Believers have sins? More than that, "...a multitude of sins." Really? Yes.

If believers are going to come together, even for the word of God and prayer, there will need to be love, fervent love. One person will say a hurtful word. Another will be inconsiderate in their actions. Someone who is going through a rough time will take

offense where none was given. Someone else will be harsh. At other times there will be friction regarding disagreements concerning raising children, decorating the church, folding banners, attending service during a pandemic, spending money, wearing appropriate clothing, and the color of the walls. Love is a gift of God which we are to show to our fellow believer in order to cover over a multitude of sins. If you happen to notice that your neighbor has a multitude of sins, then St Peter offers you something you can use to deal with it—love, fervent love. Dig down deep and love one another.

This is true in every area of life, even outside of the gathering of believers. Without love there will be no family, no marriage, no office group, no sports team, no friends, etc. Those who govern and those who are governed are going to need some love.

At first we over look one another's sin. There are failures, mistakes, and forgetting. The daily sins and offenses of each of us, we don't even bring them up. In one ear and out the other. We don't blab them to our neighbor and say, "Do you know what she did?" Our response is "No, and please don't tell me. I'm sure you have already forgiven her." We do our best to put the best construction on everything. In Christian love, we even make excuses for our neighbor. They were probably going through a difficult time, she didn't mean it. She probably doesn't even remember what she said it.

St. Peter says to "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling." In Christian love treat your fellow Christian as if he had come over for dinner. We are to be welcoming and pleasant with them. Once again, it is not Christian love, nor is it forgiving when you grumble about having to love someone. It's not the number of sins that determines whether you are to be loving. When you go to Proverbs 10:12, it will say, "Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins." Where there is love, it can cover over whatever sin comes up.

Now if there is really one sin, out of the multitude, that needs to be addressed, then you speak to them directly about it. If there is a real sin that is not glorifying God, then you do it gently and with the desire to win your brother over. The goal is that "in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Third, our Christian love is to be shown to our neighbor in our vocation. God has placed you in a particular place. You have a place in a family and at your work. You may be member or even an office holder at church. You may have a next door neighbor with which you interact. We must recognize that everything that we have is a gift from God. Use whatever gifts you have been given to serve your neighbor. Verse 10 says, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

It is helpful to remember that we are to be faithful in the gifts we have received. Direct your attention to what God has entrusted to you. He may give to you a skill or ability that you can use to help your neighbor or even benefit the church. You may be able to sew beautiful things, or organize projects or people, or comfort others you're your thoughtful words.

But don't think that you have to be better than others to love your neighbor. God may give you a job to do and though you may not think that it is your "gift," you do it anyway. Do it the best that you can. Knowing that God has laid it in your lap. I can't preach like Luther, but I'm still called to preach. God has placed me in Herrin at this

particular time and in this particular place. If God has entrusted something to you, then do it with fervent love.

At times I have seen people become busybodies. They try to run their neighbors house, rather than be concerned with their own family. Pride leads to telling everyone else how they should live their life and the way to do things. Christian love is to serve God where He has placed us. Its not that your neighbor doesn't have a multitude of sins, its just that its none of your business.

Now, if you have been given children, then yes, that is your business. Teach them. Discipline them. Correct them. Your fellow believer may need a different kind of fervent love from you. But if you treat a dear friend like your own child, you can be sure to offend them as you overstep your bounds. God has given us different gifts and responsibilities. St. Peter says, "If anyone serves, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies."

Dare I speak this boldly in telling you to be serious in your prayers and fervent in your love toward your neighbor. Why yes, Christian love demands it. St. Peter says, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God." I would never speak this way toward you, if I hadn't been made bold by the divine office of pastor, which I have received. I need to swallow my timidity and use the gift God has given me so that you know how to live a Christian life.

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Second, "Above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins' (Prov 10:12)."

Third, use whatever gifts you have been given to serve your neighbor.