

“SHMILY”
1 Corinthians 13:1-8
Holiday Island Presbyterian Church
February 17, 2019

INTRODUCTION:

**Almost every wedding I have performed,
included this reading from 1 Corinthians.**

**If there were a rule book for marriage –
- a spiritual marriage handbook –
- this would be it.**

**It basically says that talk is cheap.
It is easy to *say* things,
but if what is said is not said out of love –
- not backed up by love –
- it is just so much noise.**

**Paul uses the term a *clanging* cymbal.
That sound is just downright irritating!**

**It goes on to say that no matter what skills we may have
if we use those skills without love –
- the product of our skills and knowledge
amount to nothing.**

**Regardless of how generous we may be –
acts of generosity that are not done in love
gains us nothing.
Nothing beyond a tax write-off.**

The bottom line of this passage is:

whatever we do, we must do out of love
in order for it to conform to Christian principles.

CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENT:

What I am about to say will be a bit controversial.

So, if you quote me, please do so accurately.

Paul then gives a vivid and complete description of love.

What if the first part is directed *to* us –

- giving us guidelines on how we should act out of love;
that love should be the guiding principle
behind our motives and actions.

And the second part is directed *for* us -

- giving us a description of God's love *for* us
and calling us to live up to God's standard.

For years, I have seen this second part
as a description of how *we* should love.

But what if it is a description of how *God* loves?
And a call for us to reflect that love?

It is certainly true that God's love is patient and kind.
It's also true that God's love for us always perseveres.
God's love for us never fails.

There is absolutely *nothing* we can do to earn God's love.
Our goodness is not enough to claim it
our badness is not enough to lose it.

We are loved by God because we are *created* by God.

**Being human and living in a chaotic world,
we don't always make the right decisions,
we don't always act in a loving manner.**

**Because we don't trust each other –
- or always trust ourselves, for that matter –
sometimes it seems that God is distant and uncaring.**

**Our prayers seem to go unanswered.
And we make the mistake of thinking God doesn't care.
Or we weren't *good* enough to warrant answered prayers.**

**And we begin to feel as though God doesn't love us
as we expect to be loved.**

Nothing could be farther from the truth!

SEEING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH JESUS:

In John 14:9,

**Phillip has asked Jesus to show the disciples the Father.
They want to see God for themselves.**

Jesus said to Phillip –

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

**In those moments when we begin to doubt the love God has for us,
all we have to do is to look at Jesus.**

It was out of love for us

**that Jesus swapped His place in heaven
for the dust of a carpenter shop.**

**Love moved Jesus from the laid-back, serenity of Galilee
to the dangerous and corrupt Jerusalem**

**It was love that silenced Him before Pilate
and it was love that kept him on the Cross.**

Again, from the Book of John 15:13

**“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for
one’s friends.”**

**The New Testament is filled with scripture
that reassures us we are loved by God.**

John 3:16 –

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only
Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have
eternal life.”**

Romans 5:8 -

**“But God demonstrates his own love for us in
this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

MISUNDERSTANDING LOVE:

**We don’t understand this kind of love
because we have not experienced this kind of love.
And we aren’t capable of this kind of love.**

**The first kind of love we experience is fiery.
It is passionate, it is self-centered.
It’s all about how we feel.**

The Greek word for it is *eros*;

from which we get the word: erotic.

This kind of love happens to us.

We don't seek it; it seeks us.

**The day Marjorie Richardson walked into my 3rd grade class
I was smitten with this kind of love.**

**Every time I tried to talk to her
the best I could do was to stutter and stammer.**

That infatuation didn't last long.

**By the end of the third grade,
I had moved on.**

**Then there is the kind of love
commonly found amongst long-established couples.
It is it as a mature, realistic love
that is about making compromises,
filled with patience and tolerance.**

It is called *pragma* love.

**The psychoanalyst Erich Fromm said
we spend too much energy on "falling in love"
and need to learn more how to "stand in love."**

***Pragma* is precisely about standing in love;
—making an effort to give love rather than just receive it.**

ILLUSTRATION:

**I recently heard of a rather odd little game
that a couple had been playing for years.**

**One of those little games couples play
that only makes sense to them.**

**From about the first week of their marriage,
they would leave little notes to each other
in place where they would be easily found.**

**Sometimes taped to the bathroom mirror,
sometimes on the refrigerator,
or the steering wheel of the car
or packed in a lunch box.**

All the note said was: “SHMILY.”

**Written in all capital letters,
and obviously misspelled.**

This went on for years and years.

**Late in life, after many years of marriage,
the woman fell ill and eventually passed away.**

**At the funeral, when the service was over
and they were gathered at the grave site,
the husband placed a note on the coffin.
“SHMILY” was all it said.**

**A granddaughter saw the note –
- the whole family knew about this strange little game –
- and she asked the old man:
“Poppy, what does the note mean.”**

The old man smiled and said:

“SHMILY” – it means See How Much I Love You.”

GOD’S LOVE FOR US:

The Greeks had a word for God’s love – *agape*.

It is the most radical of all forms of love.

It is selfless love.

We can only fully experience this kind of love through God.

We can – and do – achieve some levels of *agape* love.

The word *charity* comes from this word.

We try to help others who are in need.

We try to act charitably towards one another.

C.S. Lewis referred to this kind of love as “gift love.”

It is the highest form of Christian love.

However, because we are flawed human beings,

we tend to withhold this kind of love

from those we see as unworthy.

Someone hurts our feelings,

a friend betrays us,

we judge someone a criminal

and we withhold our love for them.

That never happens with God!

Remember what I said about *earning* God’s love?

You can’t do anything to gain it;

and you can’t do anything to lose it.

If we truly believed what I just said,
we would be more loving towards one another.

CONCLUSION:

Understanding this kind of love
begins with understanding what happened at the Cross.

When they crucified Jesus,
they hung a sign over His head.

John 19:19 says it read: INRI

That is a Latin acronym which translates as:
Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.

I think it should have read: “SHMILY”
See how much I love you!

PRAYER:

We get so banged up in this world, God of Infinite Love, that we forget how very much You love us. We offer love and get disrespect and hatred in return. The storms of life seem to leech all the *agape* love out of us.

Remind us that Your love never fails.

Pick us up, dust us off, heal us, and let us feel Your love for us. May we be strengthened by that love so we can continue to do Your will. Hold us close and bless us. In the Name of the One who showed us how much You love us, Jesus. Amen.