

THE FIRST 15

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

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As we endeavor to build our lives on Christ the Cornerstone, we see how God's grace moves us from self-concern to concern for others.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and holy Lord God, I come to this quiet place to spend some time alone with You. I quiet my noisy thoughts and still my restless body. I breathe deeply and slowly, inhaling the promise of Your love and peace. Open my heart to receive a fresh experience of Your Holy Spirit. Open my ears to hear the message You have for me today. Open my mind to sympathize with the struggles and disappointments of others. Open my mouth to offer words of kindness and encouragement. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13:8-10

REFLECTION

The rule of the Christian life is a rule of love. Love is a verb that acts for the good of another person. That is the kind of love Paul speaks of in his letter to the Romans. That is the love that fulfills the law. All of God's commandments found in the Bible can be summed up in the love of God and neighbor. Such love means to cease any actions or attitudes that would potentially harm another person and instead adopt actions and attitudes that would benefit others and promote good for them.

Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's love and acts out of that pure love in all that He says and does. The love of Christ warns as well as comforts, promises as well as fulfills, it is a love that sacrifices itself upon a cross for our salvation and redeems us from the pit of the grave. His love is self-sacrificing and self-giving in every sense of the word.

On our own, we are far from capable of that kind of love for others, but with the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, God moves us toward that perfect love in our lifetime. If we are open to grace, cooperating with God's good work in us, we will find ourselves more loving, more patient, more forgiving, more empathetic, growing in mercy, kindness and yes, love. That is truly miraculous when we consider the depths of human depravity, the levels of human selfishness and the devastation of human hatred, violence and fear.

What would it mean for us to grow in love for others? Even those who disagree with us. Even those who are outside of our belief system. Even those who have an understanding contrary to

ours. Even those who malign us. Even our enemies. What would it mean to have sincere compassion for our brothers and sisters, our hearts filled with mercy and our eyes filled with kindness? Believe it or not, God is shaping and forming us this very moment, maturing us in this kind of love.

Jesus Christ laid down His life for me. Jesus went to the cross for my salvation. He died while I was yet a sinner - a selfish, self-concerned, unkind, unmerciful, unforgiving, uncompassionate, self-centered, naive person. His grace was my redemption. His grace saved my soul. His grace changed my heart. His grace moves me to a place of sincere love. Love for others. Love for my neighbor. Love for my enemy. Yes, only God can do that.

Ask: How might God's sanctifying grace be working in me to love others - even those with whom I disagree? How can I better cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit moving me to a place of greater love?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy and loving God, without Your grace and goodness at work in my life, I surely would continue to struggle to love others with a sincere heart. Move me to a place of love that is pure and true. Change my attitudes, alter my motivations, raise my awareness and help me see other points of view. Repair divisions and rebuild relationships that have suffered due to disagreements and selfish actions. Let me live a life of love - loving You and loving others in the name of Jesus Christ. May they know we are Christians by our love. Amen.