



Sermon Growth Guide

November 7, 2021

Good Medicine - Amoritzanz

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 13:13

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Big Idea: Love ought to be central in my life.

Foundations

We begin a brief and light-hearted series on love, joy and peace this week, the first three qualities of The Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5.

God grows His fruit (singular, the one great fruit) in every believer. The Fruit of the Spirit is the cumulative effect of these qualities growing in the life of the child of God: love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

How does The Fruit of the Spirit grow in the life of the believer? Galatians 5:13 says by “serving one another humbly in love.” Galatians 5:25 says by “living by the Spirit, keeping in step with the Spirit.”

Eugene Peterson writes, “Fruit is the result of a long organic and living process. The process is complex and intricate. Fruits are not something made, manufactured or engineered. ... They are the results of a life of faith created by God.”

This week, we specifically focus on love. Love is what Jonathan Edwards calls “the sum of Christianity.” Our text this week says that without love nothing else matters.

Open your time this week praying that everyone understands the centrality of love - that each of us understands that we must be known by those around us as loving people.

Understanding God’s Word

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. What’s the big idea?

Verse 13 says that “these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” Pastor Tim explains why love is the greatest. What does Tim say about why faith and hope are (at the final analysis) lesser virtues than love?

Applying God’s Word

John 15:4, the words of Christ: “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” Here, “to remain” means “to abide” or “to dwell.” We are called into a life of close and affectionate relationship with God. As we “remain” in Jesus, the Spirit grows His fruit in our lives.

How is your abiding going? Help one another root even deeper in a life of abiding. What spiritual practices or rhythms can you cultivate in your life as you seek to abide in the Father, Son and Spirit?

Witnessing God’s Word

We must be known as a loving people. How are you known? What is your next step in those around you experiencing the love of Jesus through your life?

Can we have some fun? Anybody up for a good laugh? Amor means love in Latin. "Itanz" means nothing. I made it up. Did you know that they are running out of syllables available to create new names for drugs? We have all seen the ads and what they promise. We have all heard the possible side effects and snickered! I thought we could have some fun for a few weeks. Who can help but laugh at that video (shown on the monitors)? We need to laugh. Laughter is good medicine.

But that's not the series; it's not a series on laughter. This is a short little series on the first three of the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). I have a friend whose grandparents would not let him into the house when they came to visit until each grandchild recited the nine fruit of the Spirit! This was in Minneapolis, in winter! Let's get serious. We can memorize this. "Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control." Nine things to pray for. Nine things to watch for growing out on the limbs of our tree as we are rooted and established in faith in Christ. Nine things the Holy Spirit produces in every single believer over time. These are not gifts for one or two special people. These are not eccentric, individual spiritual gifts, like some other gifts we read about in the Scriptures. No. These gifts come to every single believer in Jesus Christ. We are not going to look at all nine, just the first three. Love. Joy. Peace. These are **Good Medicine** we all need.

It is called the fruit of the Holy Spirit. They actually don't come in pill form. I wish they did. Maybe if we call those Balance of Nature people could get it a pill, then we'd have our 150th Birthday

Project paid off in no time. They don't come as pills. They grow in our lives as a product of steady attachment to Jesus Christ. The always quotable Eugene Peterson put it this way, "Fruit is the result of a long organic and living process. The process is complex and intricate. Fruits are not something made, manufactured or engineered. They are not the product of the drawing board. They are not the invention of a genius. They are not the product of a sophisticated technology. They are the results of a life of faith created by God... What happens when we live God's way? Quite without any effort on our part things begin to appear in our lives much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard, things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity." That's what we are going to watch for. Fruit to emerge as we connect with Christ. Fruit like Love—affection for God and neighbor. Joy—exuberance and vitality about life. Peace—serenity and calm, fearlessness that surpasses human understanding, rooted in heaven.

First comes Love. **Amoritanz**. Benefits outweigh side effects and your prescription costs are covered! Forget that; that was just a joke. Love. What is love, as we watch for it to emerge heavy on the branches and vines? 1 Corinthians 13 is the famous Love Chapter. Why not look there? You hear this read at weddings. It carries a balanced beauty and poetic quality that lends to that sort of thing. But it isn't a love poem. It is a charge to the church. In context, this letter from Paul is to a church in conflict. On the positive side, this young church in Corinth had a thriving gospel ministry of growing faithfulness to Christ in the middle of a, well, sordid and seedy kind of a city. But on the negative side, they seemed particularly gifted at finding things to fight about with themselves! Even the gifts of the Holy Spirit were something to argue over. My gift is



better than your gift. My role is more important than your role. Paul, finally, under the Holy Spirit, lifts up love. Love surpasses all of these gifts.

Love is nothing to compete over or to use to prop ourselves up as more important than others. If you get into a love competition, well, that's good! But people want to make themselves special. "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:1-2). Using my spiritual gifts to set myself up over others is nothing. Love surpasses these gifts, tongues and prophecy. How about acts of kindness? I give much more to the poor. I suffer much more than you do for my faith. I sacrifice a lot more time every Christmas than you ever have. "If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).

So, then, what is the character of love? "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). I remember studying this passage in a Bible Study when I was a teenager. The leader offered this amazing exercise, a good exercise I think. He said, insert your own name everywhere the word "love" appears. This is a picture of Christian life. "Tim is patient, Tim is kind. Tim does not envy, Tim does not boast, Tim is not proud. Tim does not dishonor others; Tim is not self-seeking..." Let's just stop there! I cried so hard on the

way home I had to pull over on the side of the road. What a challenge. But this is what the Spirit of God is working in each of us. To be this kind of man, to be this kind of woman. Love.

Love is not weak. Love is powerful. Paul points out next that love goes on forever. It's eternal. It endures. "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away" (1 Corinthians 13:8). In Greek thinking, the longer something lasts the more valuable it is. Eternal things are the best things. Paul points out here that love endures. Love never ends. It never meets completion. Prophecies come to a finish point. You predict something, (there are different kinds of prophetic expressions, but Paul is talking about future prediction here), you predict something, then it comes to pass. Now that prophecy is done. All finished. Tongues. Paul is talking about spiritual utterances of angelic or heavenly language. Some are more familiar with this than others. Paul's point is that the knowledge is partial and one day becomes complete. That's how it is with knowledge; it is partial until you know the whole thing. When you know the whole thing, your partial knowledge is no more; it's finished. Paul wants us to know love lasts forever. "For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). Love is different from these. Love never ends.

The more you love, the more you grow in love. It has this way of just



going on and on and on. One of the gifts of being in a church like ours is getting to run around with couples who have been married for 50 years. Love doesn't grow stale and brittle, not if you're doing it right! Not if you're growing in love with Jesus as your guide. Love grows deeper, sweeter, richer, fuller. It is never done. There is always another layer. One church father described love as falling into an infinite loop of desire for God's beauty, like staring into a spring where the water is bubbling up. Gregory of Nyssa wrote, "As you came near the spring you would marvel, seeing that the water was endless, as it constantly gushed up and poured forth. Yet you could never say that you had seen all the water. How could you see what was still hidden in the bosom of the earth? Hence no matter how long you might stay at the spring, you would always be beginning to see water. For the water never stops flowing, and it is always beginning to bubble up again. It is the same with one who fixes his gaze on the infinite beauty of God. It is constantly being discovered anew, and it is always seen as something new and strange in comparison with what the mind has already understood. And as God continues to reveal Himself, man continues to wonder; and he never exhausts his desire to see more, since what he is waiting for is always more magnificent, more divine, than all that he has already seen." That's how love is, Christian love, Christ-like love. It never ends.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13). Why is it the greatest? Faith is believing in something unseen. When finally you see it, faith is done. Hope is confidence in what is coming. When it comes, hope is done. Love just goes on and on and on, and grows deeper. It changes you as you live into it. It forms you into the likeness of the beauty you

contemplate. Love is a fruit we should watch for as we abide in Christ, as we stay attached to Christ and allow the Spirit to grow life in us and pour vitality into our spirits. Love is the first of the fruit of the Spirit. Love is pretty good. Let's have more of it. Let's watch and pray for this fruit. Love.

The Christian life is a life of love. "I'm worried if I become a Christian, I'll be less loving to those around me. Christians seem mean." You're upside down. Either from your own lack of understanding or from a tragic witness of failing Christians. The Christian life is a life absolutely governed by love. Did you ever hear about the church that forgot to love? It rocked at running programs, it gathered thousands for worship, absolutely killed it in teaching, best in town at distributing charity, but it forgot to love. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). Love comes from God and fills the church and overflows to the world. The church that forgot to love, it just isn't church. How do we cultivate this fruit? We can't just get a prescription. We hang on to Jesus; we worship with passion; we abide in His Word and Sacrament; we watch and pray for the organic emergence; we root around in the soil also—take out the stones, remove the weeds and make room for God to grow love. Jonathan Edwards preached, "A Christian should at all times keep a strong guard against everything that tends to overthrow, or corrupt, or undermine a spirit of love... For love is the sum of Christianity." More love. Amoritanz. Your prescription costs are covered.

