

March Victorious in Selfless Love

- ✦ For all that love is (vv.4-5)
- ✦ For all that love does (vv.6-7)
- ✦ For all that love will be (vv.8-13)

In the name of Christ Jesus, our love, dearly loved and loving in Christ:

It used to be that whenever we would have a sermon on **Love**, we had to first explain that this is not Hollywood “love.” That was illustrated in one of those shows we thought was hilarious as kids. When the beautiful and the handsome running down the beach toward each other finally collide face-to-face, they turn to the camera and smile. And all their teeth fall out. That’s *Love, American Style*!

But where do you start nowadays when marriage is mocked as one man and one woman for life, redefined by our laws into a gross perversion of God’s divine design, and left with no basis in gender issues that can only enslave our youth? If you boil it all down, the bottom of the pan of today’s *Love, American Style*, is a sorry mess of total selfishness. Our culture has systematically cut out God the Creator and is left with little more than a poison popsicle stick that can never satisfy but only destroy.

Meanwhile, our loving Creator still whispers in His Word: ***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind....Love your neighbor as yourself.”*** (Matthew 22:37f) This is so important that we’re planning to invest our weekly Bible Studies this summer on Wednesday evenings in God’s **Love** as it translates into male-female relationships – starting with creation all the way to the Lord’s instructions through the Apostle Paul. Married or single, all your relationships will be refreshed and blessed as our loving Lord Jesus empowers us to **March Victorious in Selfless Love**. Today from the Great Love Chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, see what **love is...does...will be**.

✦ For all that love is (vv.4-5)

“Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. It does not brag. It is not arrogant. ⁵ It does not behave indecently. It is not selfish. It is not irritable. It does not keep a record of wrongs.”

Sadly, I would be lying if I told you that this describes us. Family is God’s factory for Christian character, but wouldn’t you agree that at home or at church – **love is** often sorely lacking? God specifically commands us to ***“love one another just as I have loved you.”*** (John 13:34) So why must I confess so many times with classmates, coworkers, siblings, or my spouse that I’m impatient, unkind, envious, bragging, arrogant, indecent, selfish, irritable, and stuck in my records of wrongs? Since ***“the wages of sin is death,”*** what else do I deserve from God than eternal torment in a place lost from love?

See why that Word of God is so soothing? ***“God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”*** (John 3:16 EHV) ***God is love.*** (1 John 4:8) And Jesus is God. (John 1:1-14) So Jesus is **Love** like none other – always ***patient...kind...free from envy or bragging or arrogance...totally decent...unselfish...never irritable....*** He washed clean our whole ***record of wrongs*** with His holy precious blood. Is God satisfied? Easter shouts, “Yes! ***It IS finished!***” (John 19:30) God set up your bank account of His righteousness in your Baptism. Catechism cashes the check. Confirmation sets you spending Word and sacrament. God’s forgiveness empowers us to love one another. Jesus is so much more than a fine example. ***“God lives in union with us, and his love is made perfect in us.”*** (1 John 4:12) As we grow up, refreshed by Word and sacrament, we **March Victorious in Selfless Love** – **For all that love is** like Jesus. Here where **love is**, we live!

✠ For all that love does (vv.6-7)

Christ-like **Love** “*does not rejoice over unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth.* ⁷*It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*” Think of examples of what **love** does.

America is wracked by politics of immigration with no incentive to solve problems. Seems most politicians only see voters. Meanwhile, God’s people, taught to live in love like Christ, want legal immigration like our grandparents. As **Love** prevails, your heart goes out to children trapped in human trafficking. How do we **March Victorious in Selfless Love** as strangers on earth, citizens of heaven?

Start with God’s Word. Remember God commanded Joshua to conquer the Promised Land by what the Canaanites considered illegal immigration. God commanded the Israelites to exterminate nations that had been living in open rebellion against God for centuries. So how would a harlot in the border city of Jericho respond to the news of this invasion? Rahab hid the spies! Then she pleaded for her family. Can you hear how she *rejoices with the truth*? She said to the spies, “*I know that the LORD has given you the land. Because of you, terror has fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land are melting in fear before you.* ¹⁰ *Indeed, we have heard that the LORD dried up the waters of the Red Sea in front of you when you came out of Egypt, and we heard what you did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan—to Sihon and to Og. We heard that you devoted them to destruction.* ¹¹ *We heard, and our hearts melted, and no one’s courage could hold up anymore against you, because the LORD your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth below.* ¹² *So now, please swear to me by the LORD that since I have shown kindness to you, you in turn will show kindness to my father’s house. Give me a trustworthy sign* ¹³ *that you will preserve the lives of my father and mother and my brothers and sisters and everyone who belongs to them, and that you will spare our lives.*” (Joshua 2:9-13 EHV)

Check it out in Joshua 2, Ruth 4, Matthew 1. Rahab married an Israelite. Who was her son? Boaz. Whom did Boaz marry? Ruth – another foreigner. Both are among the four women in Jesus’ genealogy. Rahab and Ruth were eager to **March Victorious in Selfless Love – For all that love does** and...

✠ For all that love will be (vv.8-13)

“*Love never comes to an end.*” Staples of life on earth will end. The Last Day will no longer need preaching because faith will give way to sight. Other languages won’t be needed, because every soul will understand God in the Judgment – whether in the terror of condemnation for stubborn unbelief, or in the elation of acquittal in Christ’s righteousness, stepping at last into the brilliant light of an open heaven. Our partial and incomplete knowledge will suddenly surge into full understanding. As the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write: “*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put away childish things.* ¹² *Now we see indirectly using a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I was fully known.* ¹³ *So now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.*”

When we get to heaven, all the circuits will be wired and all the lights will be on. We will be able to see how God got the Gospel to our first family members then to us – and know them all by name as we are known by God and the angels and everyone there. We will see all the ways God used us to bring the Gospel to others. No one will need to tell us to “praise the Lord.” We won’t ever stop when our minds and hearts can finally grasp all God’s grace and goodness in heaven’s eternal **Victorious** celebration.

We asked Dr. Becker (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1984): **Faith** fulfilled and **love** complete, but how will **hope** remain? He reminded us of the Creator’s infinite imagination. Around every corner we will discover a new surprise. God’s grace and blessing will keep producing more **hope** in the eager anticipation of good from God. “The glories of heaven are inexhaustible, and we shall never get through exploring them.” ¹ In Christ we **March Victorious in Selfless Love – For all that love will be**. Amen.

¹ R.C.H. Lenski, quoted in Carleton Toppe, *1 Corinthians – The People’s Bible*, p. 126.

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