

Meditation on I Corinthians 13:4-7, 12-13

⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

These words from the conclusion of the great hymn on love are among the most beloved and profound words of the Scriptures. Coming at the end of that beautiful poetic statement on love, we all too readily rush to the end – the “bottom line” – that affirmation that “the greatest of these is love”. But it is good to remember that love – however exalted – is not all there is.

The triad begins with FAITH. It is faith that carried Helen Lesner through her long life and it is faith that brings us here this morning. For some of us, faith is a constant companion. For others, faith is a hunger, a thirst, a yearning. For still others, faith is a neglected side of our lives. For all us, faith is a basic human need.

Even at death – especially at death – faith is the courage we need to face living and dying. It is through faith in the God we know in Jesus Christ that we have a companion to walk with us through the difficult days of living and the dreaded days of dying. It is through faith that we find the power to put our broken lives back together again. It is through faith that we grasp God’s gracious acceptance of US, so that we can accept ourselves and love our brothers and sisters.

The goal of faith is HOPE. The author of Hebrews wrote **Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of the things not seen.** Death is the mystery of life we cannot comprehend, only accept with hope, in the conviction that within God’s care, *this life is not all there is*. It was hope that carried Helen through those long days at the end of her life. And it is hope that gives us the vision to see through the darkness of our grief to the light of God’s new and never-ending day. It is hope that connects we who mourn with all of those saints who now from their labors rest. It is hope that completes and makes perfect our faith.

“Faith, hope, and love, these three abide. And the greatest of these is love.” It is love that binds us one with another as parent and child, sister and brother, friend and friend. It is our love for God and love for neighbor that defines our faith. But it is not OUR love that is the greatest of all: it is GOD’S LOVE FOR US that is the greatest thing of all. It is God’s love for us that brings us to faith. It is God’s love for us that comforts us in our grieving. It is God’s love for us that gives us hope that through Jesus Christ we and our loved ones shall never be separated from each other or from God. It is through God’s love for us that we can and shall go on from this day forward.

“Faith, hope, and love, these three abide. And the greatest of these is love.” And it is through God’s great love for us that we are certain that ...there is nothing in life or in death or in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is our through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God! AMEN.

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