

SERMON: 3 February 2019 – Rev Alistair Cowper

“It’s all about Love”

(Luke 4:21-30 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

[2 SLIDES - cartoon, pew]

[5 SLIDES - Alpha Questions]

Last week we looked at how Jesus made use of Scripture and I came across a good illustration of that.

[SLIDE - how Jesus used the Scriptures]

He used love to determine what Scripture means. His guiding light was love.

Paul puts it like this in one of today’s readings:

[SLIDE] “So above all else, let love be the beautiful prize for which you run.”

1 Corinthians 13:13 TPT

One of the last things Jesus said to his disciples was:

A new commandment I give to you: love one another.

John 13:34

The 13th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians teaches us what the essence of love is. It begins by telling us that:

[SLIDE - this love is more than ...]

It’s more than words - if I could speak in the languages of earth and of angels, but did not have love.

It’s more than gifting - if I had the gift of prophecy and understood God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, but did not have love.

It’s more than faith - if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but did not have love

It’s more than generosity - if I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, but did not have love.

Love is more than words, spiritual gifting, faith or generosity.

Words, gifting, faith and generosity can be beautiful things when done from a heart delivered by Love.

*We might say to ourselves the same thing Paul says to those early followers of the Jesus Way:
that it used to be, in the past, that our hearts were not redeemed by love:
it used to be, in the past, we used to utter words in jealous anger;
it used to be, in the past, we might have exercised amazing spiritual gifts of healing and prophecy in order to promote our own self;
And it used to be, in the past, we gave our money with one hand expecting a return in the other.*

But, thanks to God, that if that was the case in the past, we're no longer like that or at least we no longer need to live that way. We've seen a better Way. We're made new. We're lead by the same Spirit that leads Jesus, and his Way is the new Pattern for our lives.

[SLIDE] “But he walked right through the crowd, leaving them all stunned.”

Luke 4:30 TPT

I love how Jesus was able to do that. Surrounded by a mob desperately trying to throw him off the edge of the cliff for claiming to be God in the flesh, he walks right through the crowd. It's not physically possible to do that.

[SLIDE] This Love must be very powerful.

This Love has the power to deliver and redeem people.

This Love has the power to remove people from the midst of conflict.

This Love has the power to change people's circumstances.

This Love has the power to never give up.

This Love has the power to be consistently kind.

This Love is a safe place to shelter.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things,

believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.
(1 Cor 4-8)

[SLIDE - Jesus in the crowd at top of hill]

I wonder what 'crowd' you might need to walk right through. What's your 'crowd'? Where are the pressures in your life? What can the love of Christ deliver you from? Where is Christ's love needed in our church and community?

For many years Joan Mackenzie has been sharing in the power of God's love in Chad. Joan is now going to share a few reflections of her time there.....

*Father God, you have revealed to us the most powerful love.
You have sent it to us in the person of Jesus.
And you've gifted it to us by the gift of your Holy Spirit to us.
May all we do, be rooted in the love of Christ.
May the love of Christ be our guiding light.
And may our community be blessed
As we live out such love, day by day.*