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IN NOMINE JESU

I Corinthians 13: 4-7 Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

L O V E

The story is told of a foreigner who came to America. Knowing very littl English, he walked into a drugstore and wandered over to the magazine rack. Aha, he thought, here is a word I know -- love. The word was printed all over the cover of a magazine which was otherwise adorned with scantily clad girls. So that is what love means in America, he thought. Thereupon he walked over to another sectio of the magazine display. Here again he found a magazine prominently advertising on the cover an article on the subject of love. The cover carried a picture of a typical American family relaxing in a beautiful home. So love means a happy home life, the foreigner mused. At the very end of the rack there was a religious magazine. On its cover was the picture of a Man hanging on a cross in the last agonies of death. Underneath the picture were the words, God's love for sinners. The foreigner walked out of the store confused and discouraged. He said to himself, If every English word means so many different things, how will I ever learn this language? ..... A student of languages can easily understand his feelings. There are six different words in the Greek language describing various types of love. In our own language we seek to cover everything from the most degrading selfishness to the most sublime selflessness with this one word -- love.

I should like to divide love into three classes: love that takes, love that gives and takes, and love that gives. The first type - love that takes - is magnificently described by C. S. Lewis in his allegory of heaven and hell, entitled The Great Divorce. Mr. Lewis tells of a mother who apparently loved her son very deeply. She loved him with a fiercely possessive kind of love. Her love was not so much mother love as smother love. (She could not bear to have her son out of sight for a single moment.) She made all of his decisions for him and shielded him from every contact with reality. Since his mother refused to share him with anyone else, the poor fellow lived a rather isolated and lonely life. One day the son suddenly died, and not long afterward his mother died too. After death, the mother

discovered that she was in hell. Immediately she began to search the dark corridors for her son. Unable to find him, she was informed that her son had gone to heaven. At once she demanded to be taken to him. When she learned that this would be impossible, she thought of the next best thing: she requested that he be brought to her in hell. He needs me, she said, he cannot live without me.

The second type - love that gives and takes - is what we see so much of around Valentine's Day. Boy meets girl. I'll be your valentine, if you'll be mine! After that there are hearts and flowers - rings, rice, and Lohengrin. Another happy family is launched, and everyone lives happily ever after. This is the kind of story people like. You help me and I'll help you. I like you and you like me. We love each other because we find ~~one~~ each another lovable. Problems arise when one partner finds it more difficult to give than to take, but problems of this kind can be ironed out. They are the ~~stuff~~ kind of thing of which life is made - give and take.

Then, there is the ~~kind of~~ love that gives. It is illustrated in a strange love story that is not nice at all. The man is handsome, noble, and good. The woman is just the opposite. She is vile and vulgar, a woman of the streets. In spite of this, the man marries her and proves to be a model husband. Again and again she is unfaithful to him. She runs away and he finds her in the slave market. He brings her back home, treats her lovingly, and holds her to his heart. It may surprise some of you to hear that this story is told in the Bible - in the book of Hosea. Love that gives is not popular. It is not even appealing because it appears to be so one-sided. The average comment on the story of Hosea is understandable: For a stupid lug to give his love to someone so unworthy - what a waste of time and effort! (Yet, it is a vivid description of The point is that this story demonstrates) how God loves, the lengths to which He is willing to go in order to reach out to those who are unlovable.

The love that gives, that loves the unlovely and the unlovable, is given a special name in the New Testament - grace. Grace is not just a girl's name; it is a description of that great quality in God which went all the way for us (and

for our salvation.) Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, the ye through His poverty might be rich. Unbelievable as it may seem, (the only & unique Son of God Jesus Christ set aside for a time, not His divine nature, but the use of His divine majesty and glory. He) entered ~~the~~ our world as a man, and took upon Himself the form of a servant. He experienced the miseries and agonies of our living. He shared the trials and temptations of ~~mankind~~ our life. He went about doing nothing but good. He loved everyone with no ulterior motive of any kind, and with no strings attached. And for all this, ~~He suffered the death~~ men honored Him by nailing Him to a Cross of a ~~criminal on a~~ cross.

What is more, nothing happened to Jesus Christ by accident. Everything was by design. He was simply obeying the will of His Father. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Today's Gospel points out that Jesus was ~~very~~ well ~~conscious~~ aware of what lay ahead of Him. We go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again.

This is what the Bible is all about: purposeful grace. Throughout it is the story of God reaching out in love to people who do not deserve His love. Christ loved Peter, even after Peter had denied Him. As Judas Iscariot walked out from the Upper Room into the blackness of the night to betray his Lord, Christ's love sought him out to the very last minute. God's love seeks us out, though we are by nature sinful and impure. Although, against our better knowledge, we daily and deliberately disobey God, still He loves us. And though God gave His love without hope of return, He expects those who have received His love to express the same kind of warmth in their everyday attitudes toward their fellowmen.

The world is parched for love. Wherever ~~one goes~~ you go, there are difficult people to deal with - people who insist on causing trouble. The Apostle says: Love is patient. When confronted by difficult people, love is patient. God can tell us

a great deal about patience. He delivered a difficult people from Egypt. For them He opened the Red Sea; to them He gave food and water; He finally brought them to the promised Land. What did He receive in return? Trouble. But God was patient, to the entent that in the fullness of time He sent for His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive by adoption the great name of sons. Are you able to endure misunderstanding without anger and resentment? Can you be ignored and still retain your poise? Can you be patient beyond the point where the average person loses his patience? Love that is patient poured out its life blood on the cross. At the foot of the cross you too will find that kind of patient love.

Love is kind. Patience may be passive, but kindness is active. Someone has put it this way: Patience is love waiting with folded hands, but kindness is love working with busy hands. Without love, people are slow to see any need for showing kindness to others. Genuine love makes people quick to see the need, and prompt to fill it with kindness.

Love is not jealous. Some people become so irritated by the good fortune of others that they practically die of jealousy. They are envious of their neighbors, their friends, and even members of their own family. They resent the talents of other people; they resent the possessions of other people. There is only one way to put an end to this kind of jealousy: the way of love. Love is not jealous. Love makes us seek the best, not just for ourselves but for others as well.

Love is not boastful. Love is not interested in reward or in being praised. The hypocrites of our Lord's day did good deeds in the sight of men to gain the praise of others. In Christ's eyes, this was their greatest condemnation. Real love does not call attention to itself. It attracts attention by its own quiet worth.

Love is not arrogant or rude. It is courteous. It goes beyond good manners, which can be a surface kind of goodness. It respects the rights of others There is no arrogance or rude behavior in love, for rudeness is an expression of

contempt. God's love did not despise our humanity. He sent His Son to be one of us. Those who love cannot despise older people, or children, or poor people, or people of another race or color.

Love is not resentful. It is the common thing for a man to be resentful, keeping careful account of all the slights done to him. The world is filled with misers who hoard their hurts and nurse their resentments. But love has the uncommon distinction of never forgetting a kindness & never remembering a wrong.

Love does not rejoice at wrong. Many people rejoice at the failings and weaknesses of others, because it makes them feel superior. I am better than he! Love will not permit the fingerpointing of the Pharisee, even at those who have committed great sin. Love will not indulge in gossip. Love is sad when others fail, and is made happy when others do what is right. ~~by good news~~.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love covers over. It moves us to cover our own troubles with silence and to bear our sufferings patiently. It also moves us to cover the faults of others with a cloak of forgiveness and forgetfulness. It sees the best possibilities in the worst people. Love continues to hope (when everything seems hopeless. in spite of the worst disappointments.) Only love has the power to stand up to life, and in the face of cruel blows to return a smile.

Who, then, is capable of love? The only Person who could ever put His name into I Corinthians 13 and make every statement in this great chapter come true was Jesus Christ. He loved to the death. But, (The point is - the more we live in XP & He in us - the more we experience His love in our lives), the more we shall become imitators of His love. It cannot be otherwise. St. John put it this way: Love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Amen.