

“Love is all we need. Sure.” Rom 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Just imagine, if only words could talk. What would they say? There is one word particularly that would scream out. “Help me, help me, I am being violated, rescue me from this terrible abuse!”

Can you guess which word it is? It is not hard to guess. This word is love. It would be hard to find a word that is more abused and violated these days than this wonderful little word ‘love’.

It is true, this word has a lot of power in our culture. It is so thanks to our Christian heritage, thanks to the Triune God, who is God of love. It is not so in other cultures; for them words like honor, submission and obedience are of much greater importance.

And because in our Western culture love is almost the ultimate value, it has a great power attached to it. And this is, what people want to use, its power. Therefore, this word is abused by society and sadly by Christians as well.

For the society this word ‘love’ has become like a color. If you have something that by itself looks ugly and repulsive, what do you do? You just take and paint ‘love’ all over it. And at least for a while our eyes are deceived.

Or you can say that it has become like a spice. If you have something rotten, and unhealthy, with terrible aftertaste, you just pour love all over it, and then you can shovel it in peoples’ mouth and make them to swallow it.

Or you can say that this word is like a miraculous ingredient that can turn anything wrong into right. You just call the thing love, and in the blink of an eye, it magically changes – from wrong into right, from evil into good.

Especially we can see how this word is misused talking about human relationships. To have a random, animal like sexual act is called ‘making ... yes, making love’.

When two people don't want to get married and faithfully commit to one another, but still want to enjoy gifts of sex and life together, they can easily justify their actions by saying that 'love is more important than a paper'.

Today we have become real masters is abusing this word 'love'. Whatever sexual desires one has (towards opposite sex, or same sex, one partner or many, adults or children, members of family, etc.) whatever twisted and unnatural they may be, if only you call them love, everyone must accept and bless them.

Love is love, they say. Love is all you need. What does it mean? It seems that it means that as long, as we call something love, it's okay, and no one can object. For who would like to be so hard-hearted and unloving as to deny people their opportunity to love.

Even many Christians have failed to use their God given reason and have fallen prey to this deception. Besides, even many Christians use this word love to make their own action of lack of them to look better. How?

Seeing that our brothers or sisters in Christ, or people in our life are enslaved by sin, we often are too cowardly or too indifferent to care for them and help them to regain true freedom.

Then we may choose to hide our cowardice or indifference positioning ourselves as more loving than others. Then you can hear Christians say: "The main thing is to love them."

Meaning, you don't say anything, you don't help them to turn away from their sins, you just leave them there. And you call it 'just love them'. Even as Paul clearly states that gratifying the desires of flesh, is the very opposite to what genuine love is.

"Let us cast off the works of darkness... Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy."

Our God has a very different understanding about what loving attitude should be. We heard it today from Ezekiel. "If I (the Lord) say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand." (Ezekiel 33:8)

These are heavy words. But they are very clear about what our Lord expects from us. To love your neighbor is to care for them and to call them to turn away from their sins towards loving God, who will satisfy all their deepest needs.

There is another way how Christians abuse this word love, that is, pitting love against the Law of God as if they were opposites. The law is then presented as this hard and daunting thing that we are to do.

Then on the other hand, love is understood as this light and playful emotion. Besides, love is then presented as obviously more important. Love wins. All we need is love. And so on.

Consequently, if you say that there is love, you don't need the Commandments anymore. You don't need God's law anymore. But, as Paul explains, they are not the opposites. Genuine love and God's law are the same thing.

Listen to this: "The one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For all the commandments are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."

You see, and this is very important. The law and love are not the opposites. They are the same thing. Love is not something opposite to the law, or something better than the law, it is just one word that summarizes God's law.

All the Commandments are summarized in the one: "Love your neighbor!" The Commandments give content and shape to our love. You want to know how to love your neighbors, the Commandments tell you how.

[5th] By caring for their life, health and well-being. [6th] By caring for chastity of their relationships, their marriage and family. [7th] By caring for everything they need for this life in this world. [8th] For caring for their good name in society, and [9th and 10th] for desiring all good things for them.

You can't love your neighbor acting against God's Commandments. And that is not love if you endorse or ignore when your neighbors live against the Commandments. That is not love.

You see, this command to love your neighbor doesn't make our service to them easier. In anything, it only makes it harder, it makes it impossible to fulfil this command. When you have this command 'to love', there is no end to your service to neighbor.

On top of this, Paul the apostle calls this command to love one another our debt. Something that we need to be concerned about. Something that we need to be repaying. How can we possibly do that?

The answer is very simple. We can start repaying this debt, for we are the richest people in the world. Yes, we are the richest people in the world, when it comes to this currency of love.

We can be even more specific. Do you know who is the richest person in the world, when it comes to this currency of love? Who is the most loved person in the whole world? You are. Rejoice in this, – you are.

We all are finite. And our love is so limited. We can love some, but not others. But our God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is infinite. And His love towards us is infinite. Therefore, He doesn't need to divide His love.

A little bit here, and a little bit there. No, He can give all His love to each one of you. This is, why you can be assured that you are the most loved person in the world. There is no one whom God would love more than you.

If there is one thing in your life that will never run out, that is God's love. And He desires you to receive it and experience it. This is, why He invites you to come in His presence, here in the Divine Service.

So that He could pour His love over you, so that He could tell you about His love, so that He could show you His love in the death and resurrection of Jesus. So that He could feed you with His love in the Holy Sacrament.

Our God is love. He is the love that all people desire and long for in their hearts. It is our sin that deceives us and makes us to look for this love in all the wrong places. And our deepest longing remains unsatisfied.

But as soon as we turn to the Triune God of love, He embraces us with open arms. He is our loving parent who welcomes us at any time. He hugs us, encourages us, comforts us, gently kisses us on our foreheads, restores us by His love in the safety of His presence, and supports us in our journeys.

This is how you can start paying your debt of love. Being filled with God's love again and again, and again. As soon as you struggle to love your neighbor, as soon as the cup of your love runs empty, come here.

Comes to Jesus, come to the Father, come to the Spirit of love, and He will refill your cup until it overflows. There is never ceasing abundance of love with this God.

We can't repay this debt on our own. We can't love one another with genuine love on our own. It is God's love which we receive from Him, that flows through us towards our neighbor, as we strive to live according to God's Commandments.

We could say that our Father Himself repays our debt of love. He is love, and He is the source of all genuine love in our lives as well. His love wakes us up to walk as in the daytime, and to rejoice in the beauty and wonders of His creation.

His love puts on us the armor of light as the whole Trinity dwells with us. And even if most people don't realize it, the love of God, being loved unconditionally by the supreme Being is what everyone longs for in their hearts.

There is nothing in this creation that could satisfy these longings. All people are created for this pure and life-giving love, and they won't experience the fullness of peace and joy and happiness unless they find it.

This is how we are to think and speak about love, this is how we are to love others. When we lead them to the very source of all love, when we show them the true love, the Person who is love, our God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Only being loved by Him we are finally at home. Amen.