

## 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 - “God’s Love Language”

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In our Epistle reading for today the Apostle Paul speaks of some general rules when it comes to sharing God’s love with others. This is technically law stuff (telling us to do something), but it’s being told to people like you and me, baptized believers in whom God has created faith in His love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ and who now want to follow God’s will for our lives because we believe that’s what’s best for all of us.

It’s important to point this out—to put the horse before the cart (with God being the horse and us being the cart) since we, like the people in Corinth, are always struggling with our pride-filled, “*puffed up*,” sinful nature which puts itself first, even when it comes to working out our salvation. This, of course, is a disastrous idea. When we think that our saving faith and love for God comes from within us, where are we going to go when we want to better understand our faith and love for God? Inside us, which is not a good place to go. When, however, God enables us to know and believe in the truth that all good things, including our faith and love for God, comes from God, then our God given faith will bring us back to God and His Word to better understand and grow in our faith and love for God and for one another.

That’s why Paul point out in our text that “*If anyone loves God, he is known by God.*” If you know and love God, it’s because God has “*known*” you first, in a Biblical/spiritual sense. He has come into contact with you through His Word and Sacrament of Holy Baptism and given you faith in the Good News of His love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. “*We love because He [God] first loved us*”

(1 John 4:19).

The same is true when it comes to reflecting God’s love to others. God first has to communicate His “love language” to us. What do I mean by “God’s love language?” The term, “love language,” became popular in the 90’s through a best selling book on relationships. The author of this book, using some of the truths about God’s love from the Bible, outlines five basic ways to communicate your Christian love to others. While the author focuses mainly on marriage relationships, his basic idea is in-tune with God’s Word and can be helpful when sharing God’s love with all people. He also points out that some of these ways of sharing God’s love are more meaningful than others depending on the person.

Say, for example, you’re not a very orderly person, but someone you love, like your spouse or mother is an orderly person. One of the best ways you can let the orderly person you love know that you love them is to put their orderly ways before your disorderly way; pick up your dirty clothes for example.

Or say, for example, you’re not the huggy type, but the person you want to share God’s love with is. One of the best ways you can let the huggy type of person know that you love them is by putting their ways before your ways and giving them a hug.

The key thing that ties all these “love languages” together is what Paul is talking about in our text when it comes to sharing God’s love with others. The key ingredient in “God’s love language” is sacrifice—putting the needs of others before ourselves. The Son of God demonstrated His/“God’s love language” most clearly by become a man in Jesus Christ so that He could sacrifice His life for us on a cross in payment for our sins, thus saving us from our sins and death.

The unique thing about “God’s love language” is that when our crucified and risen Savior communicates the Good News of His sacrificial love for us through His Word and Sacrament of Holy Baptism, He not only gives us faith in our new and eternal life in Him, He at the same time enables us to live our new lives in ways which express the same sacrificial love of God to others.

This is now the main point of our lives in this world as we await our eternal life in the new world to come. Since God gives us all we need for eternal life through our union with Jesus Christ, He has set us free from our selfish “every man for himself” ways. We are now free to serve others by sharing with them the life giving “love language” of God, the Gospel, through our words and actions.

To remind us of this Good News, since our sinful nature always tries to cause us to forget it, Paul shares with us a problem he dealt with in Corinth. There continued to be many pagan temples in Corinth where meat was being sacrificed to false gods in exchange for what they hoped would be a good growing season and prosperity. Many of the people in Corinth grew up knowing and believing in these false teachings. And, even though many of these same people were now Christians, having been blessed with faith in Jesus Christ who exchanged His life for our eternal prosperity, they were new Christians and returning to their old ways was still a strong temptation.

Unfortunately, some of older Christians in Corinth, instead of being sensitive to this temptation among some of the newer Christians, were more concerned about themselves and their lives in this world. Since they knew that the idols of these temples had “*no real existence,*” they had no problem going into those temples, not to worship or share the Gospel with the people there, but to eat some of the meat offered to idols. This was evidently misunderstood by some of the newer Christians, causing them to fall to the temptation of returning to the pagan ways they grew up with.

Was the actions of the older Christians an expression of the self-sacrificing “love language” of God or an expression of the life destroying, selfish “love language” of their sinful nature? The selfish “love language” of man works to not only destroy marriages, and breakup families, but to also destroy our and other people’s eternal unity with God.

Warning us of this is in itself an act of God’s love when it’s done in the context of Jesus’ death and resurrection for our salvation. Together, God’s words of Law and Gospel work to enable us to repent of our sinful/selfish ways, rejoice in God’s forgiveness, and grow in our Christ-like love for others which put’s God ways before our ways and others before ourselves.

All glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children’s Sermon] How many of you like to pick up your toys or clean up your room? How many of your mothers like you to pick up your toys and clean up your room? One of the ways you can show your mom and God that you love them both is to do what God and your mom want you to do: to put your toys away and clean up your room.

That’s not always easy, is it? How does God help us to do what He and our parents want us to do when it’s not the same as what we want to do? By telling us about Jesus who obeyed His Father when He sent Him to suffered and died on a cross to pay for our sins, even though He didn’t enjoy suffering and dying. How did that work out? Good! Jesus rose from the dead, gives us eternal life with Him, and helps us to love others like He loves us—to do what God and our parents want us to do, even when it’s not what we want to do. Here’s a picture to color and remind you of how Jesus says he loves you by dying on the cross for you.

*Jesus Loves Me!!!!!!*

