

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity, September 12, 2021**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 351, 237:2, 464, 361, 231.

Lessons: Psalm 133, 1 John 4:7-21, John 15:9-17.

Sermon Text: Romans 12:9-10.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you know what the name of the city in Pennsylvania called “Philadelphia” means? It is actually a Greek word which means “brotherly love”. Philadelphia was founded by William Penn in the years before 1700, and as a Quaker, he had experienced religious persecution and wanted his colony to be a place where anyone could worship freely.

In the first verse of our text we find the word “love”, agape, (uh ga` pay) which is the highest kind of love, and in the second verse we find the word for “brotherly love”.

Our text follows sermons from the last two weeks which were based on the first eight verses of Romans chapter 12, and in these verses today we see that

**PAUL’S ADMONITIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO CHRISTIANS CONTINUE**

- 1. He talks about “love”, emphasizing that it must be sincere.**
- 2. He talks about the kind of hate that God’s children must have, and**
- 3. In clinging to what is good, we are to honor one another more highly than ourselves.**

Oh, yawn, this sounds like another sermon about love. Well, yes it is. But you are invited to listen carefully, because God in his Word has a great deal to tell us about love and to encourage his beloved children to share love.

Without love, where or what would we be? What is the source of our existence, the reason we live and especially why we are gathered together today? It is love. It is most importantly God’s love for you. God gave you life through your parents. God gave you eternal life through Jesus Christ. God gave you this message of eternal life through the Gospel, the good news about what Jesus Christ did for you, despite all your sinfulness.

God tells us that when we show love, ***“Love must be sincere”***, genuine. We are especially to love one another, to be devoted to one another in brotherly love. ***“Outdo one another in showing honor” “Honor one another above yourselves.”***

The love that Christians profess to each other should be sincere, free from deception and hypocrisy. Because we must depend on God’s grace to guide our lives, believers are to detest and hate all evil and love and delight in whatever is good and kind and useful. We must not only do that which is good, but we must think it and cling to it. All our duty towards one another is summed up in one word, love.

This kind of love is the very highest form of love. It is the love God had for mankind when he sacrificed – killed on the cross – his one and only Son so that we might live forever. Many bible translations also use the word “love” for several different Greek words in different places in the bible. . One is for a ‘friendship type of love’. Another is that for which humans often think of as ‘love’ but is merely sinful lust. But God through Paul here is talking about sincere love, genuine love, the greatest kind of love and he goes on even beyond today’s sermon text talking about how we can show and live that kind of sincere love.

Not only is it the very highest kind of love, but Paul here adds to its importance by telling us it ***“must be sincere.”*** Love is to be without hypocrisy. Love should not be hypocritical love. Hypocritical love pretends and

mocks. Hypocritical love looks good to many people but God knows there is still hatred in the heart instead of love.

The origin of the word ‘hypocrisy’ is literally ‘acting in a play, pretending, playing a part’. When we watch a movie or a television program or even a live play, we realize that the actors are playing a part, they are not themselves, but they are pretending to be someone else. Hypocrisy is pretending. Hypocrisy exists when we say one thing to someone and something different to someone else. Hypocrisy exists when we say things we don’t really mean. Hypocrisy exists when we pretend to agree but really don’t. Hypocrisy is especially damaging to our souls when we say things that we really don’t mean, and when we pretend to feel a certain way but really don’t think and feel that way.

Oh, how hypocrisy sneaks into our lives! As God’s beloved children, we want to serve him. We want to do and say and think things that are “right”, that agree with God’s will. But sin creeps in. We see hypocrisy – pretending, acting – all around us. How can we sinful humans come up with love that is sincere, that is “without hypocrisy”? It is by God the Holy Spirit coming into our lives. It is by immersing ourselves in what God says in his Word.

Some translations of this verse even use the word “*hypocrisy*”. For example: “*Let love be without hypocrisy*” Romans 12:9 (New American Standard Bible) and “*Love must be without hypocrisy.*” Romans 12:9 (Holman Christian Standard Bible) God sees and knows hypocrisy, and there are times when even humans can see hypocrisy as we hear and see people around us talking and going about their lives.

2

When we are sincere in our love we will really “*Hate what is evil; [and] cling to what is good. [We will] Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.*” We will honor one another above ourselves.

This is hating, abhorring, detesting, and having a horror of evil, and all wickedness and sin. And this is the kind of hate that God has for sin.

And oh, isn’t this sometimes hard to do? To hate what is evil? We are tempted by all sorts of things and activities and attitudes and evil people in this world. We are tempted to join them, to agree with them, to go along with them. We are tempted to believe, accept and even repeat their unscriptural ideas. Satan makes sin look so appealing, as if it will make us happy, popular, and well-liked and will make our lives better!

Even within the visible church there is often not genuine love. What may be presented as the kind of loving God wants from us can become a selfish love, wondering ‘what’s in it for me?’ or ‘How can I benefit by pretending to show love to others?’ Such love may make the one pretending to show love feel good, but it really does not help those who should receive genuine love.

Paul has previously in this chapter, in our two previous sermons, touched on love, especially when he was speaking of serving, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others and showing mercy.

The mark of genuine love is an abhorrent hate of evil together with holding fast to the good. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*” 1 Corinthians 13:6 (NIV)

Love, to be genuine, must have the courage to call evil by its name, and tell a brother to his face about his sin in order to gain the brother. This is truly an act of love, trying to rescue a brother from sin when we follow Christ’s Words in Matthew 18: “*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.*” Matthew 18:12-15 (NIV)

We are to do, to exercise, to practice genuine love and truthful speech. Where there is genuine love, all the brothers of Jesus love one another and care for one another.

3

Paul says that we are to “*Outdo one another in showing honor.*” “*Honor one another above yourselves.*” In these words particularly the Christians are being told not to conform to the world. Like our world today, the world in which Paul was living and preaching about Jesus Christ, the Greek and Roman cultures, had little or no use for humility.

From the Word of God we learn that honoring one another more than ourselves includes seeing the person beside you with the eyes of the God of all mercies, as a man of infinite worth, the man for whom Christ died.

All people are worthy of your love and honor because Christ died for them too, and as God’s beloved child, you want to see them in heaven, too. Such love cannot remain only a sentiment or feeling, but it becomes

an action to be carried out with continuing enthusiasm. The Holy Spirit is the source and power of such thoughts and words and deeds of love. These are things which the new man always seeks to think and perform, as if doing it to the Lord himself. In fact, Jesus will tell believers on judgment day ***“whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”*** Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

Paul wrote to the Philippians, just before telling of Christ’s sacrifice in great humility for us: ***“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*** Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV)

And here, Paul simply says ***“Honor one another above yourselves.”***

In the next verses after our sermon text Paul gives these concrete examples of showing such genuine love and honoring others more than ourselves. ***“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; .... Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends .... If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. .... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*** Romans 12:11-21 (NIV) Next week we’ll look more closely at these words.

Oh Lord, help us to serve you by loving one another sincerely! Amen.