



“Disturbed be the Law of Christ”

Theme: Building a Bridge over Troubled Waters

Weekly Memory Verse: *²³I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.* 1 Corinthians 9:23

Scripture Readings: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Galatians 6:2-3; John 13:34-35; John 15:12-13

Family Activity for the Week: Spread the love! Who doesn't like opening up the mailbox and finding that you got a letter?? Write a letter to someone you haven't seen in a while – family, friend, neighbor. Invite them into your life by sharing some of the things your family is doing/has been doing during this pandemic. But most importantly, tell them about Jesus' love for all of His children! This could be through a verse you share, or a time where God was present in your life, or the story of when you first asked Jesus into your life. “Where 2 or 3 gather in My Name, there I am with them.” – Matthew 18:20 God is present in our lives, even when we are not in a church building! We can worship God EVERYWHERE!

Monday, October 19 – Read John 13:21-38. John wanted his readers to know that Jesus didn't accidentally stumble into his saving death but chose that course (see John 10:17-18). Here he made a point of showing that Jesus knew who would betray him. His spiritual symbolism was clear: when Judas left to betray Jesus, “it was night” (verse 30). But instead of bemoaning the darkness all around him, Jesus gave his followers a new commandment that radiated heaven's light: “As I have loved you, so you must love each other. This is how everyone will know you are my disciples.”

- ▲ The command to love one another was not new. However, saying “as I have loved you” took love to a whole new level. In what ways did Jesus' model of love expand love's reach, and deepen its intensity? After Jesus taught, but before John wrote his gospel, the apostle Paul identified love as the first and greatest fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22). Ask the Spirit to guide you in shaping your view of yourself in the light of Jesus' love, so that you in turn can love the people in your life well.
- ▲ Right after Judas left on his dark errand, Jesus returned to the idea of “glory.” He said that now he had been glorified, and God had been glorified in him. From a human standpoint, there was no glory on that dark night. Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, “Swords don't glorify the creator-God. Love does. Self-giving love, best of all.” When, or through whom, have you gotten at least a glimpse of the glory of being a “champion” in living out self-giving love?

Prayer: *Lord God, let the light of your love increasingly shine out from me into the hurting, darkened world around me. Give me the courage to live that way even when others do not seem to see the value of it. Amen.*

Tuesday, October 20 – Read John 15:1-17. Historically, Israelites often saw themselves as part of a vineyard God tended (see Psalm 80:8-18 and Isaiah 5:1-7). Jesus adapted that image. When his followers stayed united to him like branches to a vine, Jesus said, their lives would bear the fruit of love. Jesus made it clear

(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for October 17-18, 2020 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

that the measure of spiritual maturity is love. Whenever we're trying to decide the right thing to do, we will never go wrong by asking, "What is the most loving thing I can do?"

- ▲ You don't have to be a great gardener to understand that any branch from a vine or tree that decided to "go it alone" would soon dry out and wither up. A key question Jesus' image triggers is this. What does it look like in practical, day-to-day terms for you to "remain" in Jesus? In what ways do your fellow believers help keep you "in Jesus"? How does your private devotional life deepen your links with Jesus?
- ▲ Jesus described the highest form of love in verse 13: "No one has greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends." That was exactly what he did the next day on the cross. But what does it mean, again in practical, day-to-day terms, for you to love others as sacrificially as Jesus loved us? How can healthy self-care be a key part of equipping yourself to love sacrificially?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep me connected to you today. Let me be a branch through which your divine love can flow freely to bless the lives of other people around me. Amen.

Wednesday, October 21 – Read 1 Corinthians 9: 19-24, Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Nowhere in Scripture will you find instructions that say, "Treat your neighbors with kindness, unless their beliefs differ from yours." Implicit in Paul's instructions was the understanding that we are to treat all people with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We are, in fact, to love all people. Admittedly, this becomes more complicated when people's fundamental beliefs are not the same as ours. Rather than looking at this as a problem and trying to "fix" them, Paul invited us to see it as a way to love extravagantly, working to find unity in unexpected places.

- ▲ Paul wrote in Romans 14:19, "So let's strive for the things that bring peace and the things that build each other up." Why is this harder when people's beliefs are different than yours? What is one concrete thing you can do this week that builds up another person, especially a person with whom you differ? What principles can guide you in deciding when loving your neighbor is more valuable than winning an argument?
- ▲ John Wesley, Methodism's founder, said in a sermon titled *A Catholic Spirit* (catholic meaning "universal"), "Even though a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without doubt, we may." How did Paul's teachings in today's passages shape Wesley's theology? Is there someone in your life with whom you do not think alike, yet you need to love alike?

Prayer: Compassionate God, help me to major in majors and minor in minors—and leave the judging to you. Help me to "put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity." Amen.

Thursday, October 22 – Read Romans 13:8-10. Paul sent this letter to Roman house churches (there were no big cathedrals in his day). Some were mainly Jewish, others mostly Gentile. Their standards of "righteousness" varied (see [Romans 14:1-15:13](#)). It was easy for them to criticize each other. Paul said the purpose of God's law or rules is to help us love. "Love doesn't do anything wrong to a neighbor," was a big challenge to people who disagreed. It was (and is) vital, because "Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law."

- ▲ Paul spoke to differences over minor issues (that seemed major to those who felt strongly about them). How do you think some of them might have initially reacted to the idea that "Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law"? Do you know anyone who is genuinely loving, but in some parts of life acts in ways that you think miss the mark? Do you believe Paul was right, or was he too soft on "law breakers"?
- ▲ How might ugly religious conflicts (e.g. the Salem Witch trials, the Inquisition) have been different if Christians had always aimed to fulfill the law by loving? How can you stand for truths that matter to you

without acting in unloving ways toward those who disagree? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in the inner qualities (that may not come naturally) that help you live out the law of love.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, “love is what fulfills the Law,” sometimes feels too easy to me. Until, that is, I try to do it—then I realize how high and hard a standard that is. Teach me how to love the way that you love. Amen.

Friday, October 23 – Read Matthew 5:17-20. Do Jesus’ words here surprise you? They may—many Christians think Jesus came to do away with the law. Scholar William Barclay noted, “Again and again Jesus broke what the Jews called the Law.... yet here he seems to speak of the Law with a veneration and a reverence that no Rabbi or Pharisee could exceed.” The passages that follow will show us that what Jesus challenged and refused to obey was a misunderstanding and misuse of “law” that had taken a deep hold among his day’s religious leaders.

- ▲ Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, “Jesus wasn’t intending to abandon the law and the prophets. Israel’s whole story, commands, promises and all, was going to come true in him.... a way was opening up for Israel—and, through that, all the world—to make God’s covenant a reality in their own selves, changing behavior not just by teaching but by a change of heart and mind itself.” In what ways can you see that Jesus’ has brought about a change of heart and mind in you?
- ▲ The great Old Testament prophets said, many times, that God cares about the inner spirit behind our acts far more than any outward show of piety (see [Isaiah 1:10–15](#); [Jeremiah 6:20](#); [Amos 5:21–24](#)). That’s why Jesus said he hadn’t come to “do away with” the law. He’d come to apply the law to the true source of both good and bad: our (often hidden) inner self. Can you recall times when you realized that your outward behavior was not matching what was inside of you?

Prayer: Eternal God, you were with King David when he wrote, “you want truth in the most hidden places” (Psalm 51:6). You taught that as you preached the Sermon on the Mount. Now plant your truth deep inside me. Amen.

Saturday, October 24 – Read Galatians 6: 1-9. In the second part of today’s reading, the apostle Paul pictured us as the farmers, who need to be careful what we plant in the soil of our lives. His point was that often our choices, rather than things we cannot help, are the source of disappointing life outcomes.

- ▲ In the first part of Galatians 6, Paul talked about relationships, about ways the Galatian Christians could help and uplift one another. Those are choices we control. When have you seen your choices, or those of someone close to you, “sow” one or more negative effects? What have you learned, or can you learn, to bring about better outcomes in the future?
- ▲ Verse 9 said doing good takes focused effort. “The first verb [“get tired”] puts emphasis on losing interest (for example, “spiritless”) and the second [“give up”] on becoming discouraged or relaxing one’s efforts.” Paul knew this can be a spiritual hazard. Have you ever gotten tired of doing good? If so, what helped renew your energy to bear good fruit by blessing others?

Prayer: Lord God, each day I face dozens of choices. Give me ever clearer vision so that I make those choices in ways that will make me, and even more importantly you, pleased with the harvest they produce. Amen.