

Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

Sharing God's Love - Hebrews 13:1-6

Let mutual love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." ⁶ So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

Have you ever worried over something? I mean spent the night sleepless and uncertain. I know that the answer for most of us is yes. But have you ever stopped to think WHY? Could it be something in my relationship with God that is allowing this to happen? Not that here is something between me and God that is causing this but maybe I think wrongly about God, therefore when I get in worrisome situations I over react.

"The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid." I know that God sometimes leads us to places we do not want to go. Sometimes God calls us to endure things we would rather miss. But when we choose to worry about how something will turn out or when God will provide an answer or trying to devise schemes to get us out of circumstances where is our trust in God? Are we worrying because we have forgotten to trust God?

Love walks in some hard places. God is calling us if we will be people of love to walk into some rough places where love must be in order to change lives, but they are still rough places.

Notice the list in this scripture: prison, marriage, encountering strangers, those being tortured, and the love of money. These can all be hard places to love. They are all the kinds of places where we can cry out to God and ask for relief or why me or cry about the unfairness of life. I think it is foolish to believe that if we accept Jesus as our savior that life will become a bed of roses.

Look at the life of Jesus or those early disciples or even some recent disciples like Mother Teresa. We are subject to all the difficulty that the world has floating around. We are not exempt from the cares or the troubles of the world.

But because the love of God has taken up residence in my life, can I learn to live on a different plane while enduring those hardships? Might it be reasonable to expect as a Christian that I might encounter and endure these difficulties differently?

The clue I think is in that first sentence and phrase: Let mutual love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality. What implies to me is that I am to be there as a source of continued love for someone going through hard times and they are to be there for me.

Who do you know in jail? Are you regularly doing something in order to be a source of love for them? What might God be calling you to do so that in spite of indeed in the very time of their difficulty they are experiencing God's love through you?

Look back at that list. What were those times that were listed. Prison: Do you have friends or family who are in prison or who have loved ones in prison. Could you be the source of God's love for them?

Notice later that it mentions torture? We do have people within our culture or circle of acquaintance who have experience torture - some in prison or at the hands of terrorists or radical governments. But if the truth be know, don't we all know families who have loved ones caught up in the drug culture. Have you ever watched what it does to the one taking the drugs and the family? Do you think they

might think of themselves as tortured? The parents, the brothers and sister, aunts and uncles and the people involved in the drug use?

Could that family, that extended family, that person involved with drugs not use knowing that God still loved them? Can you be the love of God with skin on for them? Some people need more than just hearing about the love of God, they need someone to touch them and convey the love of God into their lives.

I got to tell you I love the fact that included in this semi-list of circumstances where we might need someone to be the love of God for us is included marriage. Marriage is hard. They are breaking down all around us. Oh, how we need Christians to stand in the gap with people struggling to keep their marriage together and be the love of God with skin on helping husbands and wives to find ways to endure and in time thrive within their marriage.

Two other items made the list where the writer of Hebrews reminds us we might need the help of our fellow Christians to in the love of God. Encountering the stranger. What? Meeting a stranger might require us to have help to live in the love of God. Maybe there were very difficult strangers in biblical times. Or maybe what was being implied was just in the everyday encounters with people and life we would need the love of other Christians to live in the love of God. Sometimes it is just life that piles up and gets hard. It is no one thing and nothing we can put a finger on but just a series of small meaningless events that together cause us to need love beyond ourselves.

And lastly there it is again – the love of money. Sometimes we put things where God wants to be in our lives. We should be loving God and instead we are drooling over the next deal another big number in the check book or just the wonderful possessions that are no longer so much ours as we are theirs. Maybe we need the love of a friend in Christ to help put our life in better perspective.

Sharing God's love – at St. Paul that is who we say we are. Are you loving those around you? Are you allowing them to share the love of God with you? You are the body of Christ. Are you sharing God's love or are we just talking about it on Sunday?