**Stewardship Sunday - Christ’s Love, Our Calling: Love Speaks Confidently**

**August 11, 2013 - Faith Lutheran Church – Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Hebrews 13:1-8 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**Love Speaks Confidently**

**I. Because that is what love does**

**II. Because love speaks God’s promises**

*Keep on loving each other as brothers. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

*4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

*6 So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

*7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Reading her e-mails was sometimes kind of like cracking a code. It was pretty straightforward when she spoke of side trips she was taking, different sites she was seeing, and different aspects of the culture she was tasting. But you had to pay attention to when she spoke of “friends” with whom she got to talk about her “best friend.” You see, she was teaching English in a place where English is not the first language, in a place where there were serious punishments for the public spreading of Christianity, in a place where she’d been told her e-mails would likely be read by some beyond her intended audience.

But she wasn’t really there just to teach English. After spending most of her lifetime at our church body’s worker training schools, and now with a commitment to share the name of Jesus in her full-time calling, she was there to tell people who so desperately needed to hear about Jesus about him, her “best friend”—and yours and mine. And even though there were so many things culturally, socially, and even legally stacked up against her, she spoke confidently. Her love could do nothing but that. She was there in that foreign country to meet “friends” and start conversations about Jesus, eventually gathering those “friends” to private Bible studies. She was there so that, through her, love could speak.

Last week we heard the Apostle Paul teach us that “Love speaks precisely.” Today, “Love speaks confidently,” because that is what love does, and secondly, because love speaks God’s promises.

I. Love Speaks Confidently

Let’s look at the first part of chapter 13 here in vs.1-5. The author shows us what love does. **“Keep on loving each other as brothers.”** Show brotherly/sisterly love continually… Do we always speak in love at voters’ meetings, council meetings, Women of Faith meetings? Sometimes it’s the things that are not said, but rather muttered under our breath. Do those words show love to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

“Do not forget to entertain strangers,” literally, ”show hospitality to strangers.” Because, the author says, you don’t know who you’ll run into. How embarrassing would it be if you found out after you yelled at the cashier at the store or the specialist in your unit or the driver who cut you off was a member of our church, or a frequent guest at our church, or a neighbor, or, as the author says here, an angel, an actual messenger of God!

“Remember prisoners, as if you were one.” How often have we seen orange jumpsuits picking up trash on the side of the road, and we’ve shook our heads at them, judging them? But we’ve failed to put ourselves in their shackles. We don’t know why they are there or if they’ve repented. Is that how we love prisoners?

“Remember those who are suffering, as if you were.” You know people who are suffering, not only physically but spiritually and emotionally. You know what you would like someone to say to you if you were in that position: some words of comfort from God’s promises, words of hope, confidence and love, but too often we assume someone else will write, someone else will call, and we don’t say anything at all.

Love speaks about the gift of marriage. God’s will is that husbands and wives remain chaste to each other, and that single people keep that gift of sexual relations for the marriage bed. Would you have the confidence to speak the truth in love when your friend or son or daughter or parents says, “We’re moving in together.” Would you have the confidence to speak in love and say, “Well, that wouldn’t work for me. Statistics prove that the majority of people who live together before marriage end up divorcing each other. More importantly, God wants the best for us, and what is best is that you wait until you are married. Do you have confidence to say that in love, or will you say nothing at all?

Love speaks when it comes to money. The author says, “Be content, not greedy.” Do you have the confidence to speak the truth in love to a spouse, a child, a parent who looks at their money as their money, rather than God’s money, who wants us to manage his money faithfully? He wants us to first give back to him a generous offering, and then support family. Do you have the confidence to sit down with spouse, children and say these things?

We fail to act in love and with confidence and don’t say anything at all. The fact is, we know God’s love. We see it at the cross, in the empty tomb, we’ve experienced it at the baptismal font and altar. But we abandon this love in our own lives, and don’t love others the same way. Instead of speaking confidently, we abandon God’s promise to us, “Never to leave or forsake us, to be our helper,” when the opportunity arises to speak confidently. But so often we do not.

Should God abandon us? Shouldn’t he leave us to our own devices and not be our helper because we abandon his love and promises so often? He should. But he doesn’t. He didn’t. He spoke in love, confidently. But he didn’t just speak in love, he went through those same things people were experiencing. Jesus was imprisoned and mistreated and shunned.

He took the shackles of the prisoner. He felt the hunger pangs of the starving. He took the mistreatment of the outcast, the pain of betrayal. The Son of God didn’t just imagine what it would be like to suffer. He did it. He showed us love to the highest extent: he laid down his life, and not just for his friends—for total strangers – for you and me, who abandon that love for our own selfish ways. He became the abandoned one, abandoned by his own Father, because he took our sins on himself. He allowed himself to be forsaken by the Father, so that the Father would never abandon you because of your sins. That’s the Savior’s love in action.

And what’s more – he filled you with his love – his promise, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” He proved it by staying on the cross, and rising to life again. He proves his promise by living today, not to leave or forsake you by giving you faith at the baptismal font, by giving you forgiveness at the Lord’s Supper, by giving you these promises. He will stand by your side. He will be your helper. He will help you speak confidently… because love speaks God’s promises confidently.

II. Because it speaks God’s promises

Jesus is with us as we speak. Remember when he sent out his disciples to spread the good news to all creation? He told them, “People will hate you because of the message you share. You will be persecuted. You will be arrested and tortured. You will be made to stand before kings and princes to give an account of your ministry. Don’t be afraid. I will give you the words to say. The Holy Spirit will be speaking through you.”

Jesus’ promise does not change. (vs8**) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** The promise of Jesus that gives us confidence to speak is not one that will wear out. Unlike bread that sits on our counter and molds after the expiration day, the eternal God does not have an expiration date. Jesus is with you always. He will never leave or forsake you. That will not change.

The writer says, “**The Lord is my helper.**” Since the Lord Jesus, with whom all things are possible, is my helper, the writer asks, “**What can man do to me**?” Nothing…

There’s a missionary in our church body who lives overseas in a foreign country. One day armed robbers ransacked his home, beat him senseless, attacked his wife, and traumatized the kids, and took his stuff. Did he pack up and head back to the States? No. He and his family made the decision it would be better to stay. Why? Why would he stay? Because through it all God was with them. He is with them. He actually strengthened their resolve through all of that. They see how much need there is for the gospel. And they will not be afraid, because even those robbers could not do any real harm. Jesus is still with them and they’ve got their eternal reward waiting.

What can they do to us? They can intimidate us, “Unfriend” us on Facebook, make us feel out of touch with society, out of touch with reality. They can try to make it difficult for us to defend infant baptism, closed communion, homosexuality as a sin, God’s definition of marriage… but we don’t worry about that. We leave that all up to God. The truth is we don’t have to defend the teachings of God’s Word. It’s God’s Word. The famous preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, ““The Word of God is like a lion. You don’t have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself.” So let it loose. Let your love speak confidently. Let God’s Word do the rest.

Finally, look at the end of this text. As added encouragement, God has given us a whole host of people to learn from, people who let the lion loose and didn’t worry about the consequences, vs7: **“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”**

Think back to those people who were confident to speak the word of God even if it was dangerous. The Apostle Peter, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle John, Martin Luther… we can learn from them. How did life turn out for them? Whether they were persecuted and martyred or simply died of old age, their confidence did not waver through life, because they trusted in the power of the Word of God.

Or how about your parents, who sacrificed their time and offerings to support a church where you were baptized, could go to Sunday school, confirmation, parents who protected your family from false doctrine by bringing the Word of God into your home? Maybe it was someone here, who took the bold step to knock on your door and invite you to church? Or all of these people here that have sacrificed so much financially and still do so that this beautiful building might be here inviting you to come inside to hear love speak.

And now, think of this. Right now, today, God has positioned you as the one he has so filled with his love and forgiveness that you can’t help but show it. It can’t help but speak. So do it. Let your love speak, with all the confidence that the Lord is your helper. Because that’s what love does. Love speak confidently. Amen.