

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, February 13, 2011 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

Love in Action – Romans 12:9-10

Introduction: Today being the day before Valentine’s Day, I want to share with you a message entitled, “*Love in Action.*” It’s a lesson on how we as Christians can demonstrate genuine love. Our text is **Romans 12:9-10 (NIV)** in which Paul shares with us a couple of things that must happen if we are to demonstrate true love to each other: We must be devoted to loving others and our love for others must be sincere. He writes, “*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.*”

Once, two guys were discussing the subject of love. One said, “*I thought I was in love three times.*” His friend said, “*Oh really, tell me about it!*” His friend said, “*Well, once I really cared for a lady, but she wanted nothing to do with me.*” “*Was that not love?*” his friend asked. “*No,*” he replied. “*That was obsession.*”

The first guy then said, “*Then a couple of years ago I really started caring for an attractive lady, but she didn’t understand me.*” “*Was that not love?*” his friend asked. “*No,*” he replied. “*That was lust.*”

Then the first guy said, “*Then just last year I met a lady on a cruise ship. She was smart, funny, and had a great personality. As I followed her on that boat, I would get this strange sensation in the pit of my stomach.*” “*Was that not love?*” his friend asked. “*No,*” he replied. “*That was motion sickness.*”

Listen to what some kids said about love:

“Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on cologne and they go out and smell each other.”

“Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs.”

“Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK.”

“Love is when mommy sees daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redbird.”

“When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of your eyes.”

I guess we all have our ideas about love but it’s one of those things that is so complex, it is hard to describe in human terms, but when it’s there, you know it.

Ultimately, unless our view of love comes from God, it may not be the right viewpoint. After all, love was something that was created by God. And God says that if love is anything at all it is a matter of doing something. It is active or as Oscar Hammerstein put it in the song, “*You Are Sixteen, Going on Seventeen*”

A bell is no bell 'til you ring it, A song is no song 'til you sing it, And love in your heart Wasn't put there to stay -Love isn't love 'Til you give it away.

Love does something good for others. Let me give two examples of what some people might consider to be love. Let’s say that some guy “*loves*” football so much that he shelled out \$1,000 for a 65-inch flat-panel, plasma HDTV last week before the Super Bowl. But on the other hand, I know of people who love God so much, they routinely shell out three times that much so they can go halfway around the world to share the gospel with people who’ve never heard of Jesus. What do you think? Which one is real love in action? Is it loving yourself, or loving others?

This morning, I’m going to use several Scriptures that speak to us about this idea of love in action. First, we see that

1. Love is Kind

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” 1 Cor. 13:4-5 (NIV).

This passage comes from what is commonly called “*The Love Chapter.*” This is God’s definition of love, and the one thing I want to point out here is that God says that love is kind. Love does kind things and kindness is one of its identifying marks.

It reminds me of a story I read about a guy who opened a deli in a part of town that already had two other delis. Fearing that the new guy would steal their business, one of the established owners advertized his deli with

the slogan: “*Finest sandwiches in the world!*” The other established owner responded by putting up a sign that read: “*Best sandwiches in the Universe.*” The new guy put up a sign: “*Friendliest deli in the neighborhood!*”

That’s good advertisement for Christians isn’t it? We should be the friendliest and kindest people in the neighborhood. We should be the kindest people at work, at the bank, at the ball game, at Wal-Mart. We should be kind and friendly to everyone, everywhere we go.

Love is kind. Love does kind things for others. Love is thoughtful of others. Do you know people who are like that? I do. When I answered the call to the ministry at age 28, I realized I needed to go back to school and finish up my degree. Well, by this time, I wasn’t too excited about going to college and taking all those courses I felt I didn’t need, so I turned to my Director of Missions, Al Davis for help in finding out where I could go to get the training I needed. I arranged for a meeting with him, thinking that he could help me get in some sort of study course at a local church, but no. Al graciously took the time to sit with me on several occasions and listen to my story and talk with me about other options. He encouraged me to go to a seminary and actually arranged for me to go and visit with people connected with the New Orleans Seminary Extension Center. He set up a meeting with a current student so I could hear first-hand what it was all about. Al Davis helped me more than he’ll ever know because Al Davis was kind to me. I felt his love for me in that he was so gracious and thoughtful and sincere and genuine.

That kind of kindness does so much good because it’s a matter of action, not necessarily words. And we’ve always heard it said that actions speak louder than words. Actions speak louder than many things. It’s like someone said, “*The smallest deed is better than the greatest intention! If we are moved to do good, we will move and do good.*”

When Dwight L. Moody was in New York one time, one of the men who helped him tremendously was R. K. Remington. As Moody was leaving, he shook his friend’s hand and said: “*If you ever come to Chicago, call on me; and I’ll return your kindness.*” Mr. Remington replied: “*Don’t wait for me; do it to the first person who comes along.*”

That’s good advice. Just be kind to everyone – even when they might not be kind to you. This is what Paul told Titus in chapter 3:1-2 “*Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.*” And in 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NIV), he wrote, “*Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.*” Love in Action is being kind to each other. Secondly, we see that:

2. Love is Giving

2 Cor. 8:6-7 (NIV) “*So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*”

Paul said that the Corinthians had excelled in many things, including love, but he wanted them to also excel in their giving, which is the demonstration of love. He was literally talking about giving money or financial assistance.

Now sometimes, people are hesitant to do this. Why? Personally, I think it’s because some folks are either selfish or afraid or both. Some people are like the selfish child who doesn’t want to share their toys. They think, “*This is my money and I will use it for me.*” Or they may be afraid, and think, “*If I give it away, how am I going to make it?*”

We all need to remember this very important phrase from God’s Word: “*For God so loved the world that He gave....*” God is the motivation for our giving. And if God is love, (which the Bible says He is) than we must be as God is and love enough to give. If we love the Lord (who gives us everything) we will give back to Him by giving to others or by giving to His work.

For people to claim to believe in God and love God, but never give back to Him, it doesn’t make sense. It doesn’t add up! Also, if we love God, then we’ll love the people He loves (which is everyone) and give to them. Now that doesn’t mean we have to give them everything we have and become paupers. In fact, it really doesn’t take much, and most of the time, it’s the little stuff we do that can make a difference.

Maude Pearson, Steven's mother, used to send birthday cards or special occasion cards to everyone in the church. That was her ministry. She didn't teach a class or sing solos, but she was able to touch so many people with those acts of giving and kindness.

Another lady named Eva Baynes used to go to everyone's wedding and graduation. It wasn't much, but it was something she could do. She gave of herself and expressed her love that way, and the people took notice.

There are many ways you can give without it costing you a whole lot. And many of you do that. You take meals to shut-ins and sick folks. You work in the sound booth, or you come by and change the AC filters or light bulbs. You give hugs or pass along smiles, and it makes a difference when you do those things. That is giving in its purest sense and giving not only is a joy to do, it also has its blessings. **Proverbs 19:17 (NIV)** says, *'He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and he will reward him for what he has done.'* Finally, we see that:

2. Love is Forgiving

Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV) *"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. And 1 Cor. 8:1 (NIV)* *"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."*

Love forgives and builds people up who are hurting and doesn't try to tear them down. But so often, Church folks are known for their unforgiving spirit. In fact, generally speaking, the world thinks the church and Christians are too rigid, too judgmental, too legalistic, too harsh, too critical, and always against something. Bryant Wright, the President of the SBC said, *"We as Christians are known more for what we are against - than what we are for - and we spend so much time commenting and complaining about things that have nothing to do with the gospel that people are getting confused about just what it means to be a Christian in today's society."*

Now I know that not every Christian is a complainer or a griper, but to the world, it may seem that way, and that's bad! But here is what Jesus said we're supposed to be known by: says, *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* **John 13:35 (NIV)**

The world ought to be able to see our love for one another in how we encourage and forgive one another, and how we strive to build each other up. When people see this in us, they'll be drawn to Christ! But if all they see is griping and fussing and fighting, they'll be drawn away!

Conclusion: Rom. 5:8 (NIV) says that God showed us love in action in that, *"... While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

God's love in action was to seek us in order to save us. In fact, we see this in one of the first glimpses of God in the Bible. When Adam had sinned, and tried to hide from God, He called out and said, *"Adam... Where are you?"* Here, we don't see God as a cop hunting down a criminal. We don't see Him as a D. A. trying to get a verdict of guilty. But in that question, God is a brokenhearted Father looking for a lost child!

And that is our God. He's our kind; compassionate; gracious; slow to anger; abounding in love Father. He's a Father who loves us in spite of our faults. That is true love in action, and that is what God desires that we should be: Kind, Giving, and Forgiving!