

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

What's love got to do with it?

I want to begin today by sharing with you words written on the website *2025 International Day Of Commemoration In Memory Of The Victims Of The Holocaust*. This is the introduction,

The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG) observes January 27, 2025, as the 20th International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, marking the 79th anniversary of the liberation of the former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945. The United Nations General Assembly established this annual International Day in November 2005. This day serves as a poignant reminder of the atrocities committed during one of the darkest chapters in human history.

2025 marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Eighty years ago, in response to the atrocities of the war and the Holocaust, governments of the world established the United Nations, pledging to work together to build a just world where human rights were enshrined, and all could live with dignity, in peace. Acknowledging the milestone year, the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme has chosen as its guiding theme for 2025, "Holocaust remembrance and education for dignity and human rights".

The theme reflects the critical relevance of Holocaust remembrance for the present, where the dignity and human rights of our fellow global citizens are under daily attack. The Holocaust shows what happens when hatred, dehumanization and apathy win.

Its remembrance is a bulwark against the denigration of humanity, and a clarion call for collective action to ensure respect for dignity and human rights, and the international law that protects both. Holocaust remembrance safeguards the memories of survivors and their testament of life before the Holocaust – of vibrant communities, of traditions, of hopes and dreams, of loved ones who did not survive.¹

Though we are a few days out from January 27th the world seems to be in a place right now where we need to remember what human beings are capable of doing to huge swaths of people. The war in the Ukraine continues, the decimation of Gaza and its people still fresh in our minds, and how in the U.S. the government is rounding up

¹ [2025 International Day Of Commemoration In Memory Of The Victims Of The Holocaust | The Auschwitz Institute](#)
Accessed January 31, 2025.

people because they are not white and English speaking and deporting them. The President is clear that diversity, equity, and inclusion is a threat and I am really afraid that Canada is going to follow a similar path.

I have wondered of myself, what would I be willing to do if the Canadian government started rounding up people based on their own definitions of a person's value. We are not immune to having done great atrocities in our own country. We need only remember Residential Schools and the government's work at trying to decimate the indigenous populations in those years. I am also keenly aware that churches went along with that work as the government systematically tried to take the "savage out of the Indian."

I just came back from the Dominican Republic. There I learned that there is no such thing as an indigenous person because the indigenous population was either killed by sword or disease because of colonization, and what was left integrated into a mixed population. They are a proud people, but the traces of those who first inhabited that part of the island are growing fainter and fainter. And this is the story over and over again when we look at how Spain, Portugal, France, England, and the Netherlands colonized areas around that globe that they somehow deemed were theirs for the taking. They viewed the natural resources as valuable and the people as servants and slaves for the work of delivering those resources. They did not see the people as human beings but rather more like livestock and useful as a means to an end. The indigenous peoples were not regarded as intellectuals or equals who just happened to engage in the world in a way those who landed did not understand, nor did the colonizers feel the need to learn.

Now I realize that I am talking generally. Of course there were individuals who cared, who tried to get to know those they were engaging with, but it was not the mandate of the explorers and conquerors to get to know those who they encountered unless it was for the purpose of exploitation, and if the people did not comply, there was violence.

In modern times we have seen or at least been taught about the holocaust. It was unimaginable horror, where one nation was used for the scapegoating purposes of a narcissistic leader who somehow convinced his own nation that Jewish people and others were the enemy, or needed to be purged. There doesn't seem to be a clear line to why Hitler chose this, but somehow, he convinced one group of people to turn against others, and people believed the rhetoric.

One could go on and on about how groups of people have turned on other human beings. Human history is replete with example after example, and if we think that we are immune to this kind of human behavior in our own time, then we are sorely mistaken.

And the church is not devoid of its own history of conflict. In fact, much conflict has been initiated due to people's beliefs. So, you may ask, why this reading about love? In Tina Turner's words, "What's love got to do with it?"

In Paul's time, as he wrote to the church in Corinth, he was well aware of the conflict within this fledgling Christian community of faith. The words you heard today in the scripture reading are so often heard at weddings as a sweet refrain about love that we don't even realize that the reason Paul was writing about love in the first place was that

people were in conflict with one another. People were playing the games of power and prestige that have always plagued humans.

In terms of that church, those who had certain gifts thought of themselves more highly than others, and others gave them that power and prestige thinking that they were the better ones with the more important gifts. But Paul, using a first person perspective, and tongue in cheek was saying, "if the shoe fits" ... and so he says, "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing."

And this passage does not come without a context. Paul has spent what we have numbered as the 12 chapters ahead of this talking about the challenges in this particular community of faith and about gifts given to each by the Holy Spirit which are important for the church and without which the church does not function as it should. Yet, once again, human beings have taken gifts to be used for the good of all and used them to set people above and apart from one another rather than becoming a community of faith, hope, and love.

And in this community of faith, hope, and love, the message of love stands above and beyond all else. So, what does love have to do with it? Well, it doesn't matter how gifted we are, if we don't know how to love in real terms, not some sentimental romantic way, but in the dirt of life, with all the pain, struggle, and unknowns, then we are not loving as God loves.

Paul continues to write on the topic of love, and we so often hear this as being spoken by one person to another, but it is really the one person, Paul, speaking to an entire community of faith. This is love lived in community. Think about that.

It is how we as a church are to respond to each other, to the community outside these walls, and with love and how we are to respond when people are threatened. Our love is to be patient; kind; not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. Our love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. The kind of love we are called to bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Here is a caveat, this kind of love doesn't mean you stay in abusive relationships where you can be continually threatened with harm. Staying in that kind of relationship is not love, that is control and power over another human being. The kind of thing I am warning against. The love that Paul writes about, the love that Jesus lived and died for, that love is something else. It is love in action because another's well-being or value as a human being is threatened.

As we look at what is happening politically around the globe and in our own country, I do not hesitate to say I am more than worried. I fear for those who cannot protect themselves. But I also wonder, I am able to show up and stand up if people around me, in my community, in this country are threatened. Have I stood up for marginalized

people and, given the current political climate and impending elections, am I going to vote for those who will care for the least of us, the most vulnerable? How far am I willing to go to show love when the cost of standing up for what is love in God's word, the Bible, may cost me as well?

I don't have answers. I have to say, I don't know. But we need to think about what kind of love we are called to as Christians. This is a getting down and dirty kind of love, where what we say and do matters...where love has *everything* to do with it. How we show our Christian love, in word and in deed, can potentially make people angry with us, but to not stand up in love for those who have no power, is our Christian calling. It is risky. It is not easy. And it is frightening.

As I read these next lines from the last part of the scripture, they take on a new meaning for me about maturing in faith and responsibility for others. As you hear them ponder what they say to you in our own time and how we interact in and with the world.

¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

What's love got to do with it? Well, Everything!