

091023 Romans 13:8-14 "It's Time to Rally"

J. C. Watts Jr. said, "Compassion can't be measured in dollars and cents. It does come with a price tag, but that price tag isn't the amount of money spent. The price tag is love."

Of course, there are countless definitions of love. Even if we only consider the meaning of love, today's sermon would not be enough time. However, the love spoken of in the Bible is not a desire to possess more, but a love that continually gives and sacrifices yourself. That is why God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son.

The Bible clearly speaks of the difference between an action with love and an action without love. As Al Oneto sang in 1 Corinthians 13 in last Sunday's anthem, 'I may speak the words of angels, have faith to move mountains, and help others, but if I do not have love, I am nothing but a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.' That matters to God. God does not see as mortals see; people look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. God knows whether it was just something done to impress others, or whether it truly came from love for God and love for others.

In today's scripture reading, Romans 13:8 says, "Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." 9 The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."

The neighbors referred to here could be the people who live next door to you, or the people who live in Fairfield, or the church members next to you right now, for those attending the 10 o'clock service, the 1 o'clock service members are your neighbors, and for those attending the 1 o'clock service, the 10 o'clock service members are your neighbors. We are the church together!

Can you really love people who are far away without loving your neighbors who are close to you? It is clear that Jesus told his disciples to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth, but he did not send them to the ends of the earth

from the beginning. First, he told them to go to Galilee. Galilee was their homeland. It was the place where their family and friends were.

So today, on Rally Day, I ask you to do so. Although we have already formed a church together, there are sure to be church members whom you do not yet know well. After worship, during fellowship time, approach them, introduce yourself, and try to find out who they are. At least ask their name and who their family is. Love is not waiting for the other person to approach you first, but approaching the other person with an open and humble heart.

Be an Encourager

George Truett was a tremendously effective pastor for decades in Texas. His heart was broken when he accidentally killed his best friend while they were on a hunting trip. His daughter said that she never heard him laugh after that day. Truett had a radio program, and each day when it came to a close he would say, "Be good to everyone, because everyone is having a tough time." Because he knew personally what a heavy burden people could be carrying, he encouraged compassion toward them.

Sometimes we cross paths with people who seem to be brusque and not very easy to like. Yet there is usually a reason for their behavior, and often it is because they are hiding a heavy heart. If we take the time to understand what has happened, we may find that while they have a tough outer exterior, inwardly they are desperately wishing for someone to care about them.

Jesus said in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world... I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace." Jesus did not promise you, there will be no difficulties, no pain, no storm but that Jesus promised to give you the power to turn fear and anxiety into peace. What you must always check is whether you are in Jesus at this very moment. I think this is what Romans 13 says about how to be spiritually awake and "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Check and examine whether you are in the Lord.

In order to be effective witnesses of the Lord on this earth, we must know how to love one another, and to do that, we must know each other. The Bible says, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

This is Rally Day. I was asked by several people about the meaning of Rally Day. Webster's Dictionary defines "rally" as a verb "to draw or call together for a common purpose" or a noun meaning "a renewal of energy in joint action". Rally Day is a day set aside to reassemble after the relatively quiet summer of vacations. Come the end of summer, we need "a renewal of energy".

Sometimes, it's hard to renew our energy on our own. But it's much easier in a group. That's why we set aside one special day at the end of the summer to "rally" - to "draw together for a common purpose" seeking the power of the Holy Spirit to renew our energy for worshipping, for praying, for Bible studying, and for making and nurturing disciples of Jesus Christ for such a time as this.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, the Christian life is one of constant renewal, turning and returning to God. It's time to rally. It's time for a renewal of energy in joint action. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.