

1 Corinthians 1:1-13 is one of those Bible verses that many of us know very well. If we go to a wedding, chances are pretty good that you will hear these verses. Maybe you had these verses for your wedding. Paul wrote some pretty amazing things about love in these verses. It's sad, though, to think these verses were written for those who are getting married. That wasn't Paul's intentions at all. In fact, Paul is writing these verses to the church in Corinth because he is really upset with what is going on in this church.

Last week, we heard the words from 1 Corinthians 12 about all the gifts of the Spirit. This helps us to understand what's going on in Corinth. The Corinthians are struggling with who is the most important people within the church. If you remember well, Paul talks about the body of Christ and that a complete body consists of all of its members. Nobody says to themselves that they can live without a certain part of their body and then have it removed on purpose.

That's what Paul is saying about the church in this letter. He is not writing to people who are in love with each other: he's writing to a group of people who would rather not see each other any longer. And he's really up-set with them. Paul is dealing with people who are self-righteous, people who see themselves as right and others wrong, people who see or try to find fault with others. Paul is exhausted by hearing people who have to be right, who need to be seen, who need wealth or power over others. Paul has no time for this. Paul is worried about people who hear words like if you pray hard enough, you will get what you want. That's not true. If you have enough faith, you'll get what you want. That's not true either. This doesn't mean that prayer and having faith is not important.

Paul isn't saying that these things don't matter, but there is something more important than both of these and hope too. He writes in 1 Corinthians 13:13: And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. Paul might be shocked at how often he'd hear words about needing to believe, about how often we talk about faith these days. He would probably cringe if he heard words spouted-off by someone about certain other people not having enough faith or believing the wrong thing. Again, these are important. Faith, hope, prayer, the commandments—all of these things are important. Incredibly important. Yet, there is something more important than these and we know what it is...love.

Everything, at some point, will all fall away. There are some words that are a part of the prayers of the people that even talk about this. It says: "Grant to us who are still in our pilgrimage, and who walk as yet by faith, that, where this world groans in grief and pain, your Holy Spirit may lead us to bear witness to your light and life." Yes, here on earth, we do walk as yet by faith, but faith ends at our death. What was once faith here, becomes known to us in death—in living with the one of light and life, and love. Faith is no longer even needed. But love goes on.

We are in the time of Epiphany, and it is at this point in the liturgical year when the climax of the season leads us up to a mountain top experience. It's when Jesus turns into light, even his clothes shine. He's with Moses and Elijah. The disciples are in awe and trembling. They hide their faces and the next thing they know, God proclaims a statement of love. "This is my son, the Beloved, with him I am so pleased." The next thing they know is that when they look again, all that is there is Jesus – their light, life and love. Everyone else, and everything else went away.

May we hear the words of Paul in our hearts. May we hear and speak words about love more and more. May we live a life filled with love. May love fill us from the tips of our toes to the top of our heads. Then, may it gush out into God's creation and fill it. When that happens, then God's work through us has been accomplished. Love, love, love. That's what it's all about.