

“Wait On The Lord and Love One Another”

Isaiah 40:28-31; Colossians 3:12-17; Matthew 22:34-46

October 27, 2002

Isaiah 40:28-31 (NRSV) Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. {29} He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. {30} Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; {31} but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Colossians 3:12-17 (NRSV) As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. {13} Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. {14} Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. {15} And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. {16} Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. {17} And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 42 "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." 43 He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 44 "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet" '? 45 If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" 46 No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Mrs. Ella Q. Morgan, who was probably 75 had been gathering her Sunday school classes of eager pupils close to her on Sunday mornings during Sunday School for almost 50 years. They were the "primary class" which meant that they were 1st., 2nd and 3rd graders. They all loved Mrs. Morgan and her Sunday School class, but most of all they loved this one moment that occurred each Sunday. It was the part of the class when she would gather them close and share with them a great truth of her faith. But Mrs. Morgan was very clever and she would share this jewel as if it were a precious secret, meant just for their ears. Each of them felt so important as to be able to gather close and in whispered tones hear Mrs. Morgan tell them something they had to remember, they had to keep in their hearts.

After she had shared this moment with them they would always sing the little song – "Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come in today, come in to stay, come in to my heart, Lord Jesus."

On this one particular Sunday Mrs. Morgan told the class that she was going to retire, which meant that she was asked by her daughter to come and live with her in Raleigh, and that she felt it the right thing to do. She would miss the children terribly, and she knew they would miss her, but she knew she must go.

So on this Sunday morning as she gathered the children close she told them that of all the secrets she had shared, of all the stories she had told, and of all the lessons she had ever given, that what she was about to say was the most important of all. And if the children would remember and do this one thing, then all of their lives they would be the very kind of people she, and of course Jesus, wanted them to be.

As they drew near, Mrs. Morgan, smiled and said to them, "love one another -- now let=s sing." It was the shortest lesson she ever gave. But, speaking for myself as one of those eager little children gathered around her knees, I have never forgotten. And all my life when I have done my best to do exactly what Mrs. Morgan said that morning, things have been good.

In truth, Mrs. Morgan was the first great teacher of reformed theology I ever knew. She probably

didn't realize it, but she was. She knew that with God, nothing is as it was, and that all things are constantly changing. That God constantly seeks reform in us. And now, as always, the agent of that reform, the root of that reform, the means of that reform is LOVE.

Think about it for a moment. If all of the truth of scripture, all of the wisdom of the ages, all of the self revelation of God, all of the good intentions of the saints, all of the deeds of the church, all of the sermons and songs of praise, all of the countless instructions and laws given to order our living could be condensed into one dominant admonition from on high, don't you suppose it would be these few words, "love one another, as I have loved you?" Love God first, and foremost....and our neighbor likewise.

God in Christ loves us so much as to sacrifice self and die for us. So much as to limit God's own nature so that we might have will and choice. So much that we can not fathom the depth of that love. And yet, Jesus, summarizes all of the teachings he ever taught, all of the truth that ever came from God into these words, "Love one another, as I have loved you."

If we could love one another, as Christ loves us, which of course means that we have to love the other more than we love ourselves -- just think of the implications.

If we loved one another, we could not help but be compassionate. We would see the pain of others and rather than being indifferent to that pain we would have to respond to the pain because we would truly love that person -- that other. To fail to respond would be to deny our nature -- which is to love.

If we loved one another, we would show kindness to each other as naturally as breathing. We wouldn't get upset and angry over the least little things. We wouldn't curse a person because they cut in front of us in traffic. We wouldn't get bent out of shape because of personality conflicts. We wouldn't let insignificant slips of the tongue or lack of sensitivity bother us. We would be bright and cheerful. We would offer assistance. We would be kind.

If we loved one another, we would be humble. To love as Jesus loves is the essence of humility. It means that I am no longer as important as you in our relationship. It means that what is best for you IS best for me. Humility is my new nature. But humility does not mean that I am powerless, that I give away my agenda to achieve, it doesn't mean I become a wimp and let the world wash over me. The perfect picture of humility is Jesus Christ. And at his most humble and humiliating moment -- hanging on a cross - - bleeding and dying -- as meek as meek can be -- he was in the process of taking on the greatest foe we have, sin and the death it causes, and whipping it into submission. Humble doesn't mean weak. It means strong.

If we loved one another, we would be patient. We would not let the so called limitations of others bother us. We would accept people as they are for what they are which on the bottom line is always the exact same as what we are -- no matter what we have or what we have achieved -- and that is -- children of God. And with us, God is so patient as to allow us not one or two chances in life, but all the chances we need. To love one another is to be patient with each other. To allow each of us to live and move, not at the pace I expect, but at the pace we can achieve.

If we loved one another, we would bear with one another and forgive. Can't you hear your Mom telling you that you'll just have to bear with your younger sibling, or your little cousin, or the neighbor kid, or maybe she is saying it of you to someone else. To bear with someone is to cut them some incredible slack. To let them get away with stuff that maybe they shouldn't get away with. And then, and then, when they cross the line and hurt you or fail you or embarrass you or do something to you -- you go even further with them and forgive them. Its tough, but it is what God does for us, and if we love one another as we are loved -- it is what we do.

If we loved one another, it would change everything. It would change the way we think and the way we act. If we loved one another, we would no longer be capable of bigotry, or prejudice, or intolerance. To

love one another is to put on and wear a whole new existence. Paul says, "over all these virtues, compassion, kindness, humility, patience and forgiveness, "put on love." To wear love like you might wear an overcoat, so that it is your love that always shows. And wearing love, everything and all of us will be bound together in perfect harmony. With love on we can't help but get along. If we love one another, then all of the hatefulness, and spite, and envy, and discord, and jealousy, and rivalry, and slander, and evil among us will be overcome by the one element that is more powerful -- the love of Christ that is in us and that we share together.

Paul knows that if we can manage this then we will be at peace. The peace of Christ will rule in our hearts, which is what is meant for us from the beginning. That is what God wants for us -- to be at peace, to live in harmony, to know that fullness of joy that can be ours in Christ Jesus, to be a worshipping, admonishing, spiritual church. And the key to all of this is -- love one another as I have loved you.

I am in no way as wise as Ella Q. Morgan. I do not possess her depth of faith. I do not pretend to know all of the answers to the age old questions. But herein lies that which is the key to happiness, and joy, and the ability to cope with all that life serves up. It is that which will keep us and make us stronger as a church. It is that which will keep us strong as we seek the answers to the deepest and most probing questions that come our way. It is that which will lead you down the path of faith and life to the very kingdom of God. It is that which will allow you to be what God wants you to be. It is indeed the heart and soul of all reformation --

Love one another