

## Love

1Corinthians 13:1-13

Quinquagesima, February 11, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

In His grace and mercy the Lord Jesus Christ has promised to return again in glory. He will come to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

When He returns again in glory every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. Our Lord has told us that His return will be like lightning that flashes in the east. It is visible also in the west.

He will come with His Father's glory. He will come on the clouds of heaven. He will come with all of the holy angels. He will raise the dead.

The Lord Jesus has told us that a time is coming when those who are in their graves will hear His voice and those who hear will come out. On the Last Day when the Lord Jesus returns again in glory He will raise the dead.

We sow the dead in the earth. We sow them at our funerals. The body that we sow in weakness, Jesus will raise in power. The body that we sow in dishonor, that is to say under the decay brought on by sin, He will raise in glory, that is to say in the fullness of the righteousness that He promised them in the forgiveness of their sins. The body that we sow in corruption, that is to say the body rots, He will raise in incorruption, that is to say that the body that He raises will be freed from its corruption and will be incapable of decay of any kind. The body that we sow is mortal. He will raise it immortal. We sow a natural body, He raises a spiritual body that is to say a Spirit filled body. That is the resurrection that Jesus will perform when He comes on the Last Day in glory.

Those of us who are still alive when the Lord Jesus returns again in glory will be transformed. He will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body. He will do this in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. Our corruptible bodies will put on incorruptibility. Our mortal bodies will put on immortality. He will do this by the power that enables Him to subdue all things to Himself.

It is at the resurrection that those who are waiting for Him will receive the full manifestation of righteousness that He had promised them in the forgiveness of their sins. It is in the resurrection that the everlasting life will be manifested in their bodies that He had promised them in His resurrection.

Jesus will return to give salvation to those who are waiting for Him.

On the day when He returns faith will end.

It will end because you will no longer need it.

Right now the Lord Jesus Christ has promised you righteousness in the forgiveness of your sins. Therefore you are fully righteous before God right now. But you do not experience it. Right now you experience your sins. Therefore you believe that you are righteous before God. You do not see it. You live by faith and not by sight.

Right now the Lord Jesus Christ has promised you everlasting life. But you do not experience everlasting life right now. Right now you experience the corruption of your bodies, the slow decay of a body beset by sin in its members. Right now you experience aging and the slow loss of faculty until finally you are dead and buried in the earth. On the Last Day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns whether He raises you from the dead or you are alive when He returns, He will transform your bodies into their incorruptible state. They will not age. Therefore you believe that you have everlasting life even though you are not experiencing it yet. You live by faith and not by sight.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns all of the righteousness that He has given you in the forgiveness of your sins will be manifest. All of the everlasting life that He has promised you will be visible. Even His return itself which you believe in by faith will be visible when He returns. When He returns you will live by sight and not by faith.

I believe that German is there because people have told me that it is there. If I go there and see it, I will know it by sight.

And so when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, faith will no longer be necessary or even possible. Faith will end.

On the day when the Lord Jesus returns, hope will end.

Hope is the longing and expectation of His coming. It is rooted in faith. You believe Jesus when He says that He will return to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him and so you have begun to wait for Him. You long for His coming because you believe that He is bringing salvation to you. You expect Him to come. You want Him to come. You want Him to come and raise those dead whom you love who are waiting for Him.

When He comes the wait will be over. When He comes the eager expectation will be fulfilled. When He comes the longing for Him will be over. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we do not have it we wait for it patiently. When the Lord Jesus returns in glory, our wait for Him and for the righteousness and salvation that He will manifest in us will be over.

On the day when Jesus returns hope will end.

On the day when the Lord Jesus returns again in glory, prophecies will end.

The glorious Lord Jesus has always preferred to deal with you in humility. He could have dealt with you in His glory, but He chose not to. It is not that He does not have glory. He manifested some of His glory when He was transfigured before Peter, James, and John. He will manifest the fullness of His glory when He returns on the Last Day. So it is not that He does not have glory, it is simply that He prefers to deal with you in humility. Being God He prefers to deal with you on your own level. He had Himself incarnated. He was conceived as we are albeit supernaturally. He was born of the virgin Mary. He was baptized along with other sinners. He preached and taught remarkable things, but He did it in His humanity. He lived and paid taxes as we do. He was arrested at the hands of those who hated Him. He suffered under Pontius Pilate. He was crucified, died, and was buried. Therefore the Lord of glory prefers to deal with you in humility. He prefers that even now that He is exalted to the right hand of the Father. Therefore He sends preachers to you to announce His Word. These preachers that He sends to you are beset with weakness and sin. They are beset with their own flesh. Some of them are not even accomplished orators. Yet He is content to deliver His message through them. The delivery of this message originally is usually called prophecy. The subsequent delivery of the message is usually called preaching. Those are the way that we use the terms nowadays. The Scriptures do not always distinguish between those two terms the way that I just did. What I am saying is that whether through Saint Paul or Pastor Sharp, the Lord is in a modest, humble fashion, delivering His words.

He delivers to you His words of promise. He forgives you of your sins and promises a full manifestation of the righteousness that He has given to you when He returns on the Last Day. He promises you everlasting life which He will manifest to you when you return on the Last Day.

On the Last Day when He returns again in glory and fulfills His promises to you by giving you the full manifestation of your righteousness and everlasting life which you have in Him, you will no

longer need a preacher to tell you His promises. You will no longer need a preacher to speak for Him. Once He chooses to deal with you in glory, He will no longer deal with you in humility.

Therefore on the Last Day when the Lord returns prophecy and preaching will end.

On the Last Day when Jesus returns in glory, knowledge will end.

More specifically current knowledge will end.

What we know about God, we know in part. We do not know about God fully. We know about God what God had chose to reveal to us. In the creation and in His Word God has chosen to reveal to us a little bit more than what we need to know for our salvation. That is not everything that there is to know. Even by human standards that is not everything that there is to know.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns again in glory, we will see Him face to face. He will know Him fully as far as humans have the capacity to know Him fully, even as He knows us fully. Do not allow seminary training to fool you. Even the seminary professors know only in part. Even published theologians know Him only in part. It is only when He returns again in glory that we will know Him fully.

Right now we are looking at the Lord Jesus dimly as in a mirror. When hear from Jesus we hear from Him in His Word. And while we are genuinely listening to Jesus Himself, it is not the same thing as what the apostles experienced when the incarnate Lord spoke to them. And even that was not the same thing as what we will experience when the Lord Jesus returns and reveals the fullness of His glory.

Right now we see Jesus. When we see another we are looking at their body. When I say I see you it is because I can see your body. Therefore we see Jesus when we see His body. We see His body in the Sacrament of the Altar. And while you are genuinely looking right at Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar when you see, touch, and eat His body, it is not the same experience as what the sick and infirm experienced when they touched the incarnate body of Jesus, nor is it the same as what Thomas experienced on Easter evening when he examined the wounds of Jesus. And it certainly is not the same thing as what we will see when He returns again in glory and we behold Him in His glory.

And so right now you look at Jesus the same way you look at another person who standing next to you in a dark room and you are seeing them in a mirror. When He returns You will see Him face to face the light of the glory of God.

Right now our knowledge is partial in a similar manner to how a child's knowledge is partial. Small children and even older ones do not understand why Dad and Mom do what they do or why they do not do what they do not do because small children do not know everything that Dad and Mom know. Because children lack this knowledge the actions of Dad and Mom seem mysterious to them, but when they grow up and know the whole picture they leave their childish ways behind. They realized that when Dad and Mom did those things or did not do those things while he or she was growing up that Dad and Mom actually were doing that for their good.

In the same way we are children before God. We do not see the whole picture. Therefore we do not understand why the Lord Jesus does what He does do or why He refrains from what He refrains from doing. When He returns again in glory we will have a full knowledge, a complete picture, at least as far as human beings are concerned (we will never know as much as God does even when we are in glory) and we will lay our childish ways behind us.

Our partial knowledge will end.

And so faith ends. Hope ends. Prophecies cease. Partial knowledge will pass away.

Love never ends.

When the Lord Jesus manifests the righteousness that He has given you in the forgiveness of your sins you will love perfectly. When the Lord Jesus raises the dead in glory and transforms your bodies to be glorious like His, you will manifest that righteousness perfectly. When you manifest that righteousness perfectly, you will keep the law. The law is summed up in loving the Lord your God and loving your neighbor. You will do this spontaneously and naturally. It will not be forced or coerced. It will not be subject to weakness or decay. You will love and you will love perfectly.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns in His glory love does not end. It is the one thing that continue to exist even after He has returned. Love is here now. Love will be there then. Love is here now in an imperfect manifestation as our new man rises out of our old man. Love will be there in perfect manifestation. When the Lord Jesus returns you will freely bestow love on others and you will receive love that others freely bestow upon you.

Wars will end. Arguments will cease. Pain and suffering will discontinue. Love never ends.

So if you want to see what everlasting life looks like, practice love. When you practice love you will see in a preliminary form what everlasting life will look like. Receive the love of others and you will see in a preliminary form what everlasting life looks like because love never ends.

If you do not know what love is, it is patient and kind. It does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, that is to say that love does not rejoice when it does wrong and love does not rejoice when others do wrong. That is to say that love does not rejoice when anyone does things contrary to God's law. Love rather rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

And so it is true that for now, faith, hope, and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.