

Please read 1st
Corinthians
chapter 13

Sunday 10 May

David Burfield: faith, hope and LOVE



“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Unfortunately our understanding of 1 Corinthians 13 is coloured by wedding sermons. As we read the passage, and if we take the trouble to read chapters 12 and 14 as well, we discover it is not a message for newlyweds but a challenge to the church.

Paul understands that love is the essential ingredient that transforms the church’s ministry and worship. In essence, Paul writes that what matters is not heroic ministry but the motivation that leads us to respond to God’s love in loving service of others. [Examine prayerfully what motivates your service.]

We should be thankful that Greek, the original language of the New Testament writings, distinguishes the meanings of the all-embracing English word “love”. Here, Paul is not writing about brotherly affection or sexual love but the highest form of love that comes from God.

We should also be aware that Paul is not arranging the triad of Faith, Hope and Love as some sort of hierarchy – love is greatest, not because the others are insignificant but simply because love is eternal. In heaven faith and hope, so vital to the Christian church, become realised in the presence of the living God – ‘then we shall see face to face’ (v 12). Then we shall be fully known by the source of love and live in love. Love continues because God is love (1 John 4:8). Let us together Seek God and hence know love.



Love - a heart (often adorned with light or fire), children, Celtic knot (see left), fruit, hands crossed to cover the heart

FAITH, HOPE, LOVE



Divine faith, holy hope and *agape* love are three virtues which the Church has traditionally taught are created by God in a person when she or he becomes a believer. You can’t create them in yourself –

but you can exercise them. Having them is no credit to you, because they begin and end with God. But being a Christian and *not* displaying them is a problem.

Modern usage complicates things for us, because the words faith, hope and love are used to mean many things that are related, but different.

Our sermon series seeks to explore the way the three virtues are used in combination by the New Testament writers. The three are woven together in specific verses, passages and even through whole books. We’ll seek to shed light on what the writers meant with each of the words, one at a time, but in the context of those passages which deliberately link them all together.

And we’ll try to answer this question: if we’re a people called to exhibit divinely in-breathed faith, hope and love, what will that look like – at home, in the workplace and at school, in the community and together in church?

Sermon series:
26 April, 3 May,
10 May



Traditional images for the virtues (eg in paintings, church windows, icons and even tattoos!)
Faith - The Cross, a finger pointing upward, a wooden staff, a fancy cup, a lamp or candle, hands together with fingers extended

Sunday 26 April

Jo Kerr: FAITH, hope and love

Please read: Hebrews chapter 11; James 2:14-26

What is Faith?

"To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see." (Hebrews 11: 1)

"Faith (n): Trust or confidence; belief in the statement of another; confidence and trust in God." – Chambers English Dictionary

"Faith is believing in something when common sense tells you not to." – *Miracle on 34th Street*

Faith is belief, in action.

Salvation only comes through faith in God (Romans 5: 1-2). But we are also told in James that faith without actions is dead.

We can often struggle with our faith, and fail to demonstrate life-transforming "work produced by Faith, labour prompted by Love, and endurance inspired by Hope" (I Thessalonians 1: 3).

There are 3 reasons why people may struggle:

1. "I am just an ordinary person" – but so were all the people in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11.
2. "My faith is too small" – but it only needs to be as big as a mustard seed – which is pretty tiny. (Matthew 17: 20)
3. "I don't know what to do" – but we are guided by love, which will direct us to take a step of faith and do something with it. (I Thessalonians 1: 3)

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase - Martin Luther King, Jr.

It isn't taking a blind leap in the dark.

We take one small step in the direction that God is pointing us.

And expect transformation.



This is a direct act of hope, to look through the cloud and see a beam of the light from God. This is called in Scripture, "rejoicing in tribulation," when "the God of hope fills us with all joy in believing."

Every degree of hope brings a degree of joy.
Jeremy Taylor, from "Faith, hope, and love", 1650



Hope - the dove, an open palm, an anchor, a burning brand, a harp, hands with fingers intertwined



Hebrews chapter 6 is a chapter about faith, hope and love in a letter written to help Christians stay on track in hard times in a culture which opposed them with violent intimidation and temptation to compromise. It calls on the Christian to hold on to saving faith. God is not unjust; he will not forget "your work and the love you have shown him" and his people. Hold on to that faith and love so "what you hope for may be fully realised" (v11). This hope is "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (v19). Abraham is the pattern of faith in this hope (v15) but it is Jesus who is the high priest of our heavenly hope (v20).

**Please read:
Colossians 1:3-6,
and Hebrews 6.**

We learn from Paul's letter to Corinth that, in the end, faith, hope and love remain "but the greatest of these is love".

Writing to the Colossians, though, Paul says that faith and love "spring from hope".

Not any old hope, but hope 'stored up for you in heaven'. We tap into that hope through the

gospel, he says – the message about Christ which led to our becoming Christians, our study of the Bible

which reveals more of the substance of that hope, the way we share that hope with one another, and the miraculous

interpretation of Scripture by the Holy Spirit (Col 1:9).

Hebrews chapter 6 is a chapter about faith, hope and love in a letter written to help Christians stay on track in hard

times in a culture which opposed them with violent intimidation and temptation to compromise. It calls on the

Christian to hold on to saving faith. God is not unjust; he will not forget "your work and the love you have shown him"

and his people. Hold on to that faith and love so "what you

hope for may be fully realised" (v11). This hope is "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (v19). Abraham

is the pattern of faith in this hope (v15) but it is Jesus who is the high priest of our heavenly hope (v20).

Sunday 3 May

Nigel Marsh: faith, HOPE and love