

A Reflection For Today

Thursday of the 4th Week of Lent • HopeForNiagara.org



By: Rev. Kathleen Ordiway

Rev. Ordiway is the pastor of First Baptist Church, Niagara Falls, NY. She is also a member of the Niagara Ministerial Council and a member of the Board of Directors of Community Missions.

Do No Harm

(Texts: Romans 13:8-14)

When Sister Beth Brosmer announced in 2020 that she was stepping down from her position at Heart, Love and Soul it caused many of us to reflect. We all know that she has sacrificially served our community and followed Jesus in all that she has done. She lives the life of a true Christian. When I look at our passage today (Romans 13:8-14), I have to think that it was important to her, because of its assertion that love never does harm.

“First do no harm,” is one of the fundamental principles of medicine. We’ve probably heard it at least once in our lifetime, maybe in a movie or on a tv show, or from a friend becoming a doctor. To do no harm means that a physician will only do what benefits the patient. Our passage from Romans extends the principle of doing no harm to our relationships.



The text says that love of others is the purpose behind all of God’s commandments. Paul reminds us of the laws God gave: don’t commit adultery, don’t murder, don’t steal, don’t covet; no reveling or debauchery, no quarreling or jealousy. The he reminds us of the the commandment Jesus gave us in John 13:34, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Verse 10 in today’s passage says: “Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Jesus fulfilled the law when he took our sin to the cross, dying for us, dying for our salvation. John 15:13 says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Paul makes the connection for us: “Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law” lets us know that Jesus is Love.

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Paul's often expressed the idea that salvation wasn't going to come through the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. We all were once slaves to sin but now the death and resurrection of Jesus changes this and changes us. Now we are to love as Jesus loves. Jesus became love for us. We are to be Jesus' love for others. That's our job.

Love does no harm. If we ignore the needs of others – we do harm. If we speak down to others – we do harm. If we belittle others – we do harm. If we don't give of ourselves – we do harm. If we close our eyes to injustice – we do harm. If we turn our backs on the lost – we do harm. If we refuse to welcome strangers into our midst – we do harm. Love does no harm. Paul repeats Jesus' command – "Love your neighbor as yourself." There could not possibly be evil in this world if everyone loved their neighbor as their selves.

It is troubling to admit, but the world does cause much sadness, and suffering—it's around us every day. It can be too easy to hide from it, to shut ourselves away from the world, to try to forget what's going on. Sometimes we just want to numb ourselves. We don't want to turn on the news or read the paper. If we don't see it or hear it, maybe it's not happening. Maybe my neighbor didn't just lose her job. Maybe that child isn't being abused. Maybe everyone is going to bed with a full stomach. Maybe, if I just don't look, everything will be fine.

But if we choose to follow Jesus Christ, to live a life of love, we can't pull covers up over our heads and ignore what's going on in this world. We cannot refuse to truly live the faith we say we have. When we open our eyes, we will see where the needs are. We can bring God's light to those who need it most. And there is one more thing about love.

When we open our eyes, we will also see where the light continues to shine, where others – like Sister Beth – are being Christ's love for the lonely, Christ's compassion for the downtrodden, Christ's direction for the lost. When we open our eyes, we can see where we are being called. We will see we have a question to ask ourselves: "Am I the person that was supposed to make a difference in the 'right here and right now?'" We can't be everything to everyone, but we have to do what we can, when we can; we have to be respectful, compassionate and kind – always kind. We must follow the principles of love for one another, remembering: First, do no harm.

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