

## 1 Sermon, November 3, 2013

Texts: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Luke 22:14-23

Title: "Faith, Hope and Love"

The story I am about to tell you is fictional; but it could very well have happened. And I want to tie it in to a story that is not fiction. . .

Grandpa had worked in the plant for 40 years. There were times when he shook his head and wondered, but he knew he needed to support his family, and with no easy alternative that paid as well, Grandpa just kept working.

He knew the chemicals he used were hazardous. After all, he had to wear a respirator and gloves and safety glasses. But sometimes, even through the respirator, he would get a certain sweet smell that he knew was not a good thing. And often he could smell that sweet odor when he was changing back into his street clothes.

In the last 20 years, things improved. Ventilation got better. Respirators got better. Even the manufacturing technology gave off less gas.

But the damage had been done. Grandpa was lying in a hospital bed at age 69, dying of lymphoma. He wasn't regretting anything. It had been a good job. They'd tried to keep up on safety at the plant. The products they'd made had made people's lives better. He'd given his children a good life.

Grandpa had called the children and grandchildren together, and with Grandma at his side, the hospital put on a feast right there in his hospital room. No, it wasn't the regular way of doing things, but when the nurses and the nutritionists heard of the idea, they were all for it.

Granma had brought a couple of silver candlesticks, one of which was on the bedside table, and another on a card table nearby. A generous helping of roast beef was piled on one of the hospital plates, with sweet potatoes, hash browns and green beans on other plates. Each member of the family was given their own tray, which they balanced on their knees or set somewhere.

Grandpa insisted everyone wash their hands at the little sink, and some of the grandkids had fun with the automatic faucet.

Then Grandpa took a roll from the plate, and prayed. He said,  
"Thank you, God, for sustaining us over many years. Thank you  
for the love we share. Help us not be afraid to sacrifice ourselves  
for the cause of love. Amen."

Then Grandpa said to everyone there:

## 2 Sermon, November 3, 2013

You know how it is in our family. I don't know if I'll be here tomorrow. I'm certainly not hungry. The food is really for you, to remind you to keep on being a family.

I'm sorry that Robert isn't here. I know he's ashamed. I know he's borrowed money from me that he won't pay back, and that money would be part of the inheritance for the rest of you. He's hurt me, and it hurts you, too.

Still, I don't want what Robert has done to keep you from being a family. I don't want bitterness in your hearts toward each other. Please let this be my legacy; that this family lives at peace with each other.

I want you to eat together now as a family.

Then everyone helped themselves, and quite a few tears were shed.

This story is fiction, but parts of it have happened in many families in our congregation.

You may notice that there are within this story elements of what 1 Corinthians 13 talks about.

Grandpa's speech reflected what Paul wrote:

If I give away all my possessions, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

It's not about possessions or money. It's about love.

Grandpa also acted out what Paul said:

Love is patient; love is kind. . . It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Grandpa lived out his faith. He lived out his trust that God will guide his family.

Grandpa lived out his hope that his family would find a way to forgive and stay a family.

But most of all, Grandpa lived out love; the love of Jesus, which he showed by calling the family together to share in God's bounty.

The story is fiction, but it helps us to think of what Jesus did at his last supper with his disciples. Even in the midst of heart-rending sadness, Jesus spoke of hope – hope in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus shared this meal with his disciples – the community of people who lived with and learned from Jesus. Even in the midst of a certainty that he would soon be arrested and put to death, Jesus shared his desire to eat with them.

### 3 Sermon, November 3, 2013

He shared his faith that his death would involve a new covenant with God – a new relationship between God and people.

Even in the face of betrayal, Jesus presided over this meal, celebrating the blessings of God. And he gave them something to remember and to hold in their hearts; a meal of bread and wine that they could share together over and over in memory of him.

Here we are together, about to share a meal of bread and cup that has been going on for almost 2,000 years. We are remembering important people who have died. We are celebrating God's blessings of life and sustaining grace. We are remembering that those faithful ones who have died are in God's care in a place that we can only imagine. We are keeping the faith, believing in the hope, and living the love of Jesus.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, NRSV.

"When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this." Luke 22:14-23, NRSV.