

*The Synergy of Love*

**1 Corinthians 12: 4-13**

**John 15: 12-17**

**Rev. Ron Dunn**

**5/17/2015**

I begin this morning with an observation that is obvious to everyone of us. This world can be a cruel and callous place—a place in which evil and injustice and self-centeredness seem to have the upper hand. Not only is the evidence for this assessment rather convincing in its own right, but we, as human beings, have a way of allowing our focus to become fixated on the grim nature of everyday life. I often find it rather frustrating to watch the evening local news because invariably, it seems, the focus is placed largely upon the day's events that are linked to criminal activity of some kind—whether robberies or shootings or police chases of some kind.

And while I understand that this is, in part, a reflection of our current reality, I also understand that there is another dimension to our current reality that simply does not receive the attention or the focus that it deserves.

And that dimension has to do with human kindness and the hope that takes root and begins to grow when people choose to act together upon the conviction of their compassion.

Now, I want to be clear that doing this doesn't require that we put our head in the sand and pretend that the darkness isn't there. It is simply to suggest that we allow the light to shine in the darkness. It is to suggest that our best chance of responding to the challenge of human darkness is to cultivate the power that comes in recognizing human kindness. For, when we do that, when we take the time to reflect upon the forces for good and for God that are currently at work in our world, we will begin to experience the unstoppable power of human hope.

My message is entitled, "The Synergy of Love" because I believe that it is when people choose to express their love and care for this world together, something remarkable happens...something that makes the impossible possible...something in which the end product is far greater than the sum of the parts.

By definition, synergy is: **The interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. Together, we are greater than the sum of our parts.**

One person, acting out of compassion and kindness in response to human need is an impressive thing. But when two or three or twenty three or forty choose to share in that response, there is often a power and a possibility that is greater than the sum of anything anyone might have imagined. There is a synergy of compassion and love that begins to build.

Although the Apostle Paul does not use the word, “synergy,” in our scripture lesson this morning, this is, I believe, what he is really referring to when he writes of how the body of Christ functions at its best. Using the metaphor of the human body, Paul suggests that the church has many different members or parts, each with a different gift to share for the greater good of all. Whether it is the hand or the foot, the eye or the ear, each member has a role to play in the proper function of the body. And when each member of the body does its part (shares its gift), there is a power and a synergy that enables the body to accomplish things that the individual members could not accomplish on their own.

When the Church of Jesus Christ is at its best, each one of us chooses to share the gift or the gifts that we have for the greater good of all. And when we do that, choosing to work together with a common purpose in order to reach a common goal, there is a synergy that is breathtaking!

Our Gospel lesson reminds us that this synergy doesn’t just happen on its own. No, the synergy that Paul is talking about is the synergy that is rooted in love—the love that God has for us and the love that we are called to share with others. This love of God, then, is the source of our synergy—the inspiration for the transformation that takes place when two or three or more share their gifts for the greater good of others and the benefit of all. And when we see the expression of this love, we are reminded that there is something noble within us, something that has the potential to create hope and a sense of the possible even in the midst of struggle and despair.

We are at our absolute best when lose ourselves, when we give ourselves away for the sake of the common cause and a common purpose of caring for others.

Without question, it is that love that God has for us and for our world that is, I believe, the greatest force at work in the world—far greater than the forces of darkness and injustice and self-centeredness that seem to be so prevalent. The problem is that we tend to lose sight of this fact. We tend to forget that the forces for good and for God are hard at work in our world—even though they may not get equal time in news coverage.

And, as you can see, we humans aren’t the only ones capable of working together in creative and compassionate ways! (Slide of Pandas / Dogs helping each other)

As a way of bringing this reality closer to home, I would like to take a moment to think with you about the way this synergy of love and compassion has been at work in our life together—transforming lives and transforming our world.

Yesterday, there were 50 people who came together in Wesley Center to “Stop Hunger Now!” They helped to pay for and then pack 10,000 meals that will be sent to feed hungry people around the world. If you have been a part of one of these ventures, you know that they are built upon team work—upon the idea of each member of the team doing his or her part to make sure all of the needed ingredients are placed into one bag as efficiently as possible.

And the beauty of it is that in the process of working together with your team and the other teams present, you begin to realize just what an amazing and powerful thing shared compassion can be! It would be virtually impossible to pay for and pack all of those meals by oneself. But together, people experience a synergy of compassion that makes all the difference, all the difference in the world.

Another example. Think about the synergy of love and compassion that is creating hope for the people of Thomas, Haiti.

Some of you have already been a part of this synergy, contributing your unique gifts and skills for the greater good of the children of Thomas and their families. What began as a response to the earthquake in Haiti, by the grace of God and the power of love, has become so much more. A feeding program, computers and classes, water filtration systems and solar panels have all become a part of the groundswell of compassion that now offers hope to a people who were locked in their despair.

And guess what, this synergy of care is still building, still growing, still transforming the lives of many—including those who have invested their time, their money and their skills to make it all possible. God is doing a new thing!

Finally, there is the synergy of love that our community of faith experienced during the season of Lent in which we considered the challenge of raising significant dollars to put an end to the global curse of malaria.

Many of you dared to “Imagine No Malaria” by offering your compassion and support through the checks that you wrote and the dollars that you gave. By the grace of God and your spirit of generosity, we have met our goal of raising \$10,000 for this important cause—a cause that our conference shares as well as the United Methodist Church itself.

We are all in this together and it is exciting to be a part of the synergy taking place across the country—a synergy of compassion that already is making a difference in the lives of countless people. In a few moments, we will be presenting our District Superintendent, Kristie Olah, with a check for \$10,000.

I could go on because the “ripple effect” of compassion moves ever outward in the large pond of our world.

Some of you will be attending the next Habitat for Humanity build on June 6<sup>th</sup> in Walnut Creek and you too will share in the synergy that takes place when many different people come together to share their many different gifts in ways that benefit others. You too will know the blessing and the power of making a difference—a significant difference—in the lives of those who will benefit from a roof over their heads.

For now, however, I will leave it at that. Some of you, I understand, want to get home before 2:00 p.m. As you make your way home this morning, I hope that you will take the time to reflect upon the many and varied ways in which God’s spirit is at work in our life together, inviting, prodding, pulling us into the experience of sharing our gifts and our

convictions for the benefit of others and the greater good of the world around us. This is taking place in ways large and small, some of the examples known only to the individuals who personally invest in them. But, O what a difference all of these efforts are making!

The next time you are tempted to conclude that our world is falling apart at the seams and that there is nothing that we can do about it, I trust that you will consider the difference we have already made and, by the grace of God, will continue to make when we share in the synergy of compassion and love.

While it may not make the inter-net headlines or the evening news, rest assured that that we are making a difference...all the difference in the world. Amen.