

my standards, that's when things don't go so well.

The third step is to bring the situation to the church. Maybe so that all the community of believers might pray for the situation, bringing us both before Jesus that his grace and mercy might change our hearts.

But there are times when it needs to be acknowledged that a relationship has died. That we have reached an impasse. Then what is Jesus direction? To go back to the beginning and seek to rebuild that relationship on his grace and mercy.

We are to; 'treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.' (Matt. 18:17b) How does Jesus treat a pagan or a tax collector, he gives his life that they might come to know him and be saved. His goal is to win them, but he recognises at this point in time their relationship isn't based on his love, but that's his goal.

And so once again we find Jesus prepared to pay the price in the hope that the other person might benefit, that the other person might come into a relationship of blessing with his Father. Jesus

freely pays the expenses himself that the other person might benefit.

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another..." Where is Jesus calling you to pay the expense of loving another person? In Jesus you always will have what it costs.

Let us pray. Jesus who are the people you are leading us to show your love to this week? Jesus who are the people we need to talk with person to person? Give us your courage to pay the expense so that they benefit in you.

4 September 2011

Romans 13:8 "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another..."

When I was growing up I remember hearing this saying; "You have to earn respect." But today I hear Jesus saying the opposite. Respecting another person is an act of love. Jesus never waited for a person to earn his love. If he did he wouldn't have to do anything. You can never earn another person's love. That goes against the very nature of love. Love is always a gift, which costs the giver, but is free to the receiver, blessing their lives.

"Let not debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another..." (Rom. 13:8) In Jesus I'm gifted with his love for me, that I might follow him seeking to gift others with what according to Jesus will bless their lives at my expense. If I waited for

people to earn my love, it wouldn't be love. If they had to pay, by their actions, by fitting in with what I want, by being kind to me, if they had to pay, then it's not love, it's not the love that Jesus gives. Jesus loves at his expense.

How much did it cost Jesus to love you and me? It cost Jesus his life. A price he was happy to pay knowing that his Father's love for him was always there, because he didn't have to earn the Father's love. So today Jesus is reminding me that I never get to a point of having loved someone enough, saying I've spent enough on them, now what about me.

Have you ever heard that thought; what about me? I've given

enough, now it's time for me. That's one of the devil's lies, which gets the focus on me and what I need, want, because I deserve it, because I'm worth it. The greatest killer of love is being selfish, being self-centred.

Jesus often took time out to be with his Father, to keep that relationship healthy and strong. That's very different to being selfish, thinking the world owes you because of all you've done. Jesus never becomes self-absorbed, but is always ready to love at his expense, so that we might be blessed.

Isn't it tragic then when people won't receive Jesus' gift or figure other things are better, according to their judgement. People

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am

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Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

purse things in the hope of a better, fuller life so we have carousing and drunkenness, sexual immorality and debauchery. As if these were the way to a rich and full life. I'm yet to see a healthy lifestyle that abuses your physical body, trashes you emotional well being and ignores your spirituality. Sex, drugs and rock'n roll don't give you life in all it's fullness, just a bigger and bigger headache till your lost and life is sapped of any meaning.

Paul also highlights 'dissension and jealousy'. Putting people down, bad mouthing them every chance you get doesn't bless the other person at your expense. Rather they're used by you to prove your right and can be looked up to. They're denigrated for your benefit. They're point out as bad to make you look good. The lose of their

reputation is the price to feel good about yourself. Jesus' love is always a gift, that is at our expense so that the other person is blessed. Blessed because they are drawn closer into that wonderful loving relationship that Jesus gave his life for us to share and enjoy with him.

Love pays the expense to benefit the other.

Sometimes the expense is me being unpopular, is me not being liked. Sometimes a hard word needs to be spoken, or a conflict arises, something we totally disagree with comes up. In Matthew Jesus gives us direction on how to handle these situations. What was the first step? Label the other person as the enemy who needs to be defeated. The first step of love wasn't gossip,

endlessly dragging the other persons reputation through the mud with everyone you meet. No, Jesus first step was to speak face to face with the other person.

Did you notice that the desired outcome was to 'win them over'? Not to be proven right, or to win the argument. The desire is to show love, risking a personal encounter with the other person. There's great personal expense her. I risk ridicule, or rejection.

But love is prepared to by the price for the other person's benefit. So I need to ask myself, 'Am I doing this for the other person's benefit, or am I just totally ticked off and figure they need to be set right'. Am I doing it for myself or for the person I'm going to talk with? From our recent series on walking with God, I reckon John Elbridge would have ask Jesus;

'Reveal to me my motive. Am I doing for them out of love for you, or because I'm right and they need to know they're wrong. Jesus reveal my motive.'

Then it's time to go and person to person talk with them. To share what's on your heart so that you can hear what's on their heart. One thing I've discovered in life is that if I go and attack someone I never get to hear what's on their heart. If you attack me I'm tempted to become defensive and become all the more locked into my position. If I recklessly attack someone instead of winning them I might just do the opposite and cement them in more firmly.

The debt I have is not to be proven right, but to love. Which may mean I need to lose some pride, that I might need to lose some

ground at my expense so that the other person can hear and feel Jesus' love for them at work in me.

Now that's a good question to stop and ask Jesus; 'Am I doing this as an expression of your love at work in me for this person?'

I'm the one who needs to pay the price.

When this doesn't work then Jesus says bring in a few others. Not to gang up on the other person, but as witnesses. To give their objective view of what they see happening. As they observe they might see areas I'm antagonising the situation and need to change. This doesn't make the other person right, but I don't show love for another person by words or actions that attack them.

I've noticed that people are more prepared to listen, when they see I'm listening and not telling them what they have to do. I'm right, you're wrong and everything would be just great if you'd only do what I say. I find it easy to lose perspective when I'm in the middle of something, and then it is valuable to have one or two others who can observe and say what they see, who can be witnesses.

My goal is to pay the price for a healthy relationship with the other person as Jesus would have it. I'm the one who needs to pay the price. When both parties are seeking to pay the price and not expecting the other person to submit to their will, relationships flourish. I know when I become stubborn and stuck in my ways, expecting the other person to change, to pay the price to meet