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Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: 1 Corinthians 13:6
Title of sermon: Love Knows How to Celebrate
Series: What Matters Most - #6

1 Cor. 13:6 (NIV) ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

One of the things that I've noticed over the years of 30-some-plus years -- 36 years of ministry, is that fewer and fewer people are having funerals. It's not that fewer and fewer people are dying -- same number, it's increasing. But fewer and fewer people are having funerals. Set COVID aside -- that was a weird year. Still is a weird life. I'm talking about before that. I'm saying people I'd sit with, families, "Uncle so-and-so decided he didn't want to have a funeral; he didn't think anyone would show up." That used to never happen. Man, when I got into this thing called ministry years ago, everyone had a funeral. I mean, sometimes they were weird. Sometimes -- like, one guy got up, I'll never forget this. Stands up -- he's doing his mother's eulogy. He stands up, and he goes, "Let's just be honest. My mother was not a good woman." That was his opening line! I was, like, "Oh man! This is going south!" Even the wicked ones had funerals. But nowadays -- no, not as -- probably in the church they do, but -- people kind of, because of maybe the way they live, because of some things that happened.

And that was certainly the case of Charles Roberts. When his wife was going to plan his funeral, she thought about not having it. She didn't want the fanfare. She was afraid that the news might come. And she absolutely was terrified that no one would be there but herself. Charles, on October 4, 2006, instead of doing what he normally did, and that is delivered milk, he went to a little school. He took all of the people in the school and kicked all the little boys out and all the adults out, and he kept ten little girls. He took them hostage. When the police came in, in this little schoolhouse, this Amish school, when the police came in, he shot ten of them. Five of them immediately died. Four healed -- one last I knew was still going to suffer things medically the rest of her life. So, when Charles was going to have his funeral, his wife was afraid that all the police would show up and all of the newspapers and everything else, but what she was actually afraid of was that no one would show up. The church was packed on that day. Strange -- 50 percent of them she didn't know. Not because they were news reporters -- 50 percent of the people in that congregation on that day were Amish. The elders of the church went over to her house and told her, "We do not hold you responsible. We forgive you, your family, and your husband," who took his life on that day.

They didn't stop there. They took an offering in the Amish community. They paid for the funeral. They created a fund for her kids to go to college. And when the newspaper reporters showed up, you could imagine they had no idea what to do with the story. No idea what would motivate people to go over and forgive. No idea what would motivate people to go to a funeral of an individual that they didn't know, let alone that would walk into their school and kill five of their little girls. When they were asked, one of the elders when they asked, "Why did you do what you did?" responded, "Well -- it's just our way." When you turn on the news today, it's a rare thing to find a person who has given grace and kindness when everyone expects hatred. Now, what we find is hatred, vitriolic language. When we're looking for leaders, we find people who are taking advantage of something politically or somehow trying to turn something upside down and putting a bounty on a police officer's head. It doesn't matter. When you look at the news, what you don't see is what Paul described here when he was asking the church, "I want you to live in a better way." You see, the Amish got that. They did. As strange as they are, and people

drive by, and I understand they don't like electricity -- and I get that they dress a little strange. The reality is at the end of the day, I'll take strange dressing if I can have Jesus' kind of love. If I can have people who say, "Well, it's just our way," I could almost live without electricity. Almost.

What does love look like? Paul says this is what it looks like, and the Amish said, "This is the way we want to live." It's patient, it's kind. It doesn't want what your neighbor has. It doesn't namedrop. Doesn't tell you how many degrees the person has. It's not interested in boasting. It doesn't leverage your voice because of your accomplishments. It's not proud, it's not rude. It's not self-seeking, and it's certainly not easily angered. And love is a pathetic bookkeeper -- it keeps no record of wrongs.

Tonight, we want to look at this phrase, "It does not delight in evil, but it rejoices in what is true." It doesn't delight in evil, but it rejoices in what is true. We seem to be a culture that delights in evil. It sells. I know of a recent position that somebody's trying to hire -- two people turned them down. Said, "I don't want to move. You're close to Portland -- I don't want to move there. It's 45 miles from Portland, and Portland, you'll die if you go to Portland." Well, the reality is, it's probably not, you know, the nicest place in the world right now, but -- you know, the news loves to tell that story. The news loves to tell the fact that there are 75 people downtown. And we are absolutely in love with evil. We love to sell it, we love to broadcast it, we love to threaten with it -- we love evil. Love doesn't. Love does not delight in evil. Why? Because evil is the suppression of truth, and love loves the truth. What is evil? It's the suppression of truth. It's iniquity, it's injustice. It has no regard for God, it has no regard for man. It has regard for money, it has regard for ratings, it has regard for all kinds of things, but it doesn't care about people. It's not interested in what benefits an individual. It is interested in maybe a bottom line. It's interested in leverage. It's interested in power. Evil will suppress the truth. It will twist the truth. It will take a lie and float it with 99, just a little bit of a twist -- it'll take the truth and just twist it enough to mar it and send a person down the road. It will withhold information. There are all kinds of ways you can suppress the truth. It can eliminate the context of a story and show you just a little snippet of a story, and it doesn't matter that the rest of the story tells you a completely different tale. Evil doesn't care about that. It cares about ratings. It cares about selling. It's more than willing to suppress the truth.

They purposely do it. They purposely suppress the truth for two reasons. Number one, to deceive, and number two, to defraud. You see, if I can get money out of you by telling you a lie, I've defrauded you. If I can get things out of you by twisting the truth -- I've used some evil practice to get something out of you. It's what Bernie Madoff did. He pocketed millions. Stole it from people. I have a mother -- she's 87 years of age, and she lives with us. I marvel -- I've said this before -- I marvel at the number of wicked, evil individuals who will target seniors. I'll say it today and I will say it again -- if you have a senior within your family, get active. Get involved in their life. Not to control it -- but to protect them. My mom will get two or three scam calls a day. She doesn't know how to process all of that garbage. She comes over, and, "We need to do" -- "No, Mom, it's just a scam call." It just -- I mean, I candidly want to take her phone and throw it in the Deep Six. Not because it's her fault or the phone's fault -- it's the wicked individual on the other end of it. But they understand that maybe seniors -- people my age and older -- sometimes don't have, you know, kind of all of the information, or et cetera, or -- the reality is, they get tired or they get afraid, and -- these guys are wicked. They're all over the place. Bernie Madoff has had children. Traffickers -- we've heard of that. I'm a slight addict of the news. I shouldn't be. But I watch those little children, seven and eight, being dropped off by coyotes over the border, realizing that the future of their life is going to be insanely dangerous. And there are people pocketing millions. They're brash. They openly advertise, trying to recruit certain individuals to come down and be the courier services. Because they know it's going to be so easy. That's wicked. They purposely suppress the truth. They purposely deceive. They purposely defraud others. And they think nothing of using a four-year-old little girl to travel their cocaine across the border.

See, love doesn't delight in evil. Why? Because God doesn't. The Scripture's really clear. The wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven against all the godlessness and the wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. God hates evil. And He's a great accountant. And His wrath is going to be revealed from Heaven against this ungodliness. This wickedness. People who suppress the truth. People who take the truth and twist it. People who take children and twist them. People who take single moms and who are in a really, really financially precarious place, and force them into some really horrific decisions. People who take advantage of seniors and divest them of all of their retirement funds. God says don't ever delight in evil. Don't delight in people who celebrate it and don't delight in people who use it. Evil is something God hates. Evil is the suppression of truth, and love is never happy when other people do or go wrong. It's not. Why do people celebrate it? Well, I think, by and large, it's because of envy. It's an earlier text. Says, "Love doesn't envy." But the reality is, we tend to. Why? Because we compare ourselves. We're comparing ourselves to everybody. "She's skinnier than I am." "He's stronger than I am." "They have more money than I do." "They have a nicer car -- they just bought a new car! They bought a new car three years ago!" Somebody was telling me about a new car they bought, and I was thinking to myself, "You just bought a car three years ago. You don't need a new car. I need your car! You can take mine." I thought it was a good deal. I'll even pay for the new license plates. We do. It's terrible. It happens to the best of us. We compare ourselves to people. Our health. Our children. All kinds of things. And because of that, we tend to at times get into that mode where, when somebody does well, we get a little angry, and when something bad happens to them, we get a little happy.

Benjamin Disraeli, former Prime Minister of Great Britain in the 19th century, said, "Mistakes of the great are the consolation of fools." Mistakes of the great are the consolation of the fools. It's true. Fools tend to look sometimes at great people, and when they make a mistake, we kind of celebrate -- "Oh, you're bringing me down!" It's kind of what we call the "poppy seed syndrome," where the poppy seed grows higher among all of the vegetation around it, and we love to see it cut off. After all, I mean, when you went to school, didn't you like to see the curve-breakers break? Didn't you like to see the people who pushed the grade average up kind of like have a bad day? Yes.

There was a pastor who called me one Monday. You probably know this -- Mondays sometimes are hard for pastors. Mine tend to be very good, but once in a while, you know, the weekend went really well, and then you get some love grams on Monday that tell you you're an idiot and you ought to be delivering milk for a living. So, this one pastor called me. It was on a Monday. He was panicked. "Hey, Mark -- how's your church doing?" "Well -- I think it's pretty good. It's early on Monday -- haven't gotten too many love grams yet. We'll see." "We're down 20 percent." It's like -- "Just yesterday?" "No, it's a trend, and I'm trying to find out if other churches are down 20 percent like we are." And I could tell you -- he was hoping that I would tell him we were down 20 percent. I couldn't. Didn't want to lie. "No no no, I don't think we're 20 percent." And that's almost a lie, because we were actually up that year about eight percent, and so I said, "Well, we're -- no, no, we're not down 20 percent." But I didn't want to tell him we were up eight percent -- the guy'd commit suicide! But I tell you, it was interesting. And if I hadn't done this myself, I'd think ill of him. He really wanted to hear from me that we were down 20 percent. Not that he wanted to wish evil on me. He just didn't want to suffer alone.

But love is not happy when other people do or go wrong. The problem is, when we watch TV, sometimes it tells us to celebrate evil. It makes a cynic of those who are successful. And our whole culture is teaching us today to hate those who have made it. And so, what happens is, we're being educated every day to hate people who have done well, to be jealous of people who have more than us, and to celebrate when they get it. We even have a phrase, "You gotta stick it to the man." Who's the man? It's the person who's done well. And we have a prejudice. It's in our culture, like never before. It used to not be here, but it is now. Love isn't happy when other people go wrong. Love celebrates the truth.

Doesn't celebrate when something bad happens to a person. It celebrates the truth. It rejoices. That's what the Scripture says -- "It rejoices in the truth." How do you do that?

I have some suggestions. Number one, if love rejoices in the truth, then you have to take some time to invest it into the truth. I was reading a book recently. Why do I do this? Because I'm a masochist. This book is poorly written, and it's even worse when it comes to the content of it. But the fundamental principle of this text of this book that was written is to devalue the authority and the certainty and the credibility of the Word of God. You say, "Well, Pastor, why would you read such a book?" Because there's a lot of people, especially younger people who are reading it, and I want to be well versed when I have conversations. But the entirety of the book is simply this -- let me discredit the absolute authority of the Word of God. Love doesn't do that. What love does is -- it invests time in the truth. "Thy Word is a lamp to my path." "Thy Word is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces to the division of soul and marrow." "Thy Word searches the very marrow, the attitudes, the thoughts and the intentions." If you want to rejoice in the truth, then you've got to know what the truth is. You've got to invest in it. You've got to take time. You've got to spend time there. Like the psalmist says, "How blessed is the man that does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. Does not open his heart, does not allow the wicked to come in every day and just keep pumping stuff into him." No no no. How blessed is the one who does what? Submits his heart. How can a young man keep his way pure? How can an older man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to thy Word. "God's Word have I hid in my heart so that I might not sin against you." You see, if you're going to rejoice in the truth, then you've got to invest time in it. If you're going to rejoice in the truth, then you have to spend time talking about the things that are good. I know it won't sell. Having the local dirt. Having the gossip on your neighbors. Let me tell you what -- people will listen to you. Knowing everything that's going on and every sordid detail of our governor's new edicts and everything else -- when you have that information, people -- they will stop a conversation to listen to you. Talk about your granddaughter doing well in a ballet class -- "Ahhh." [Yawn] It's a yawn! Shouldn't be. But tragically, we've been trained. We have. We've been trained as a culture. Sensationalize that which is bad, and mock that which is good. But the fact is, love changes us. My friend Dr. Robinson said -- I asked him one time, I said, "What's the number one job you do as the president of a seminary?" And he said, "I walk around and find people doing good and I tell them." That is a marvelous thing to do. Walk around finding somebody doing good, and tell them.

Remember a couple of months ago we had a traumatic experience called the "ice age"? We went through, in our house, about eight days without power, and -- you know, and we were dipping through the creek, you know, trying to feed all of the animals, and -- some of you had far worse than we did. Well, last week, our power went out again. I now know what PTSD is! Let me tell you what, man -- it resurfaced all of the stuff. In fact, it resurfaced it, and I looked at my generator, and I thought, "You Satan, stay there! I don't wanna use you!" The whole idea of going through the process, it was like -- uh uh. So -- if you're traumatized, what do you do? You go downtown and have ice cream. So, we went downtown to get some food, and we were driving back up, and I'm driving, and I saw an angel. Have you ever wondered if angels really visit earth? They do. I saw one. He was driving a PGE truck. Yeah. And I'm driving along, and I'm thinking, "I am not missing this opportunity." I whip over. My poor wife's like, "What are you doing?" "Time out. There's an angel." I rolled my window down, and I said, "Dude, I don't know you, but you're my hero! I love you, you're doing a great job -- stay at it, man! You are going to deliver all of" -- I kind of went off. For whatever reason, it was pent up. The poor guy looks at me, and he goes, "I haven't fixed anything yet, Sir." I said, "I've got vision for you, man! I've got vision! God has called you! You're gonna do it! Hang in there! I love you!" Why did I do that? Because I wanted to encourage that soul! I mean, they got called out at 5:00 o'clock, probably pulled away from dinner, probably watching -- I don't know what he was doing. But he was serving us! You see, that's what love does. It really does. It finds people doing good things and talks about it. And I guarantee you, if you

choose to do that, you'll stand out. You'll stand out like a candle in a pitch-black room, because our culture is infatuated with evil. Our culture is in love with negative stuff. Rejoices -- love rejoices in the truth. So, talk about it. And love is excited to remember the works of God.

I was thinking this past week, just in the Old Testament and the New Testament, how many different things God created, or the psalmist or the Scripture writers utilized to remind the people of God of His glory and His power. I'm going to give you three or four of them, and you just go home and let your mind wander. How many? The temple. Think of how many places in the temple it declared the glory of God or the power of God. The ark itself -- it had the mercy seat and the entirety of the ark was a demonstration of God's greatness and His power. Wasn't just that -- when David would write the psalm, when he looked at the sun, what did he see? He didn't just see the light of day -- he says, "God is like a shield to us." When he saw the mountains, what did he say? "Look to the mountains. Where does my help come from? My help comes from you, maker of Heaven and of earth." You see, when love is awakened in this world, everything that God created, everything around is an opportunity to what? To declare the greatness of God. That's what it means to rejoice in the truth. That's what it means to orient people to the power and the dignity of God's grace. And love is not afraid to talk about it. Love is thrilled when another person succeeds. It takes faith to do this -- it does. Sometimes it takes great faith to celebrate another anniversary when you're not married and you want to be. Sometimes it takes incredible faith and love to celebrate a pregnancy when you're not and you want to be. Sometimes it takes incredible faith and love to celebrate another person's new job when your job is horrible. Sometimes it takes incredible faith to listen to a person talk about how their marriage has been redeemed and God has changed their husband, when your marriage is on the rocks. Love rejoices. It's a choice. It's a choice to rejoice in that which is true and good, and to never, ever celebrate evil.

You want a great illustration? Grandparents. Grandparents are maybe my best illustration. Why? Because every grandparent I know will come up -- "Pastor, can I show you my grandkids? I have some new pictures!" Well, of course I want to see your grandkids. As long as you understand that when my wife looks at pictures, she can take 30 minutes. I take 30 seconds. But yes, I want to see your grandkids. And -- this has happened, countless times -- they will fold through -- "Oh, this is my daughter. She just got accepted to Stanford. We are so proud -- we've been praying, and God answered prayer." It's awesome. And they go through, and they show me the pictures, and -- "This is my son, and he's a pilot for --" And they just kind of go through, and they're just so excited. But not infrequently, they'll thumb through the pictures, and there will come the grandson that's not doing well. But I don't know if you've noticed what I've noticed about grandparents. This is kind of the way it goes -- "This is my grandson, John. Pastor, would you pray for him? He, one day, I know, is going to serve God. There are some hard things that have happened in his life. But one of these days, he's gonna give his life to Christ. Pastor, would you pray for him?"

See, I've never seen a grandmother celebrate evil that is transpiring in her grandson. Never once. They solicit prayer. They ask, "Pastor, would you ever meet with my grandson?" "Absolutely." "Pastor, if my son came in -- my son and my daughter-in-law -- if they came in to chat with you, would you have time for them?" "Yes." That's what love does. It never lifts up evil. It never drags down the poor decisions of her grandson. No grandmother would do that -- not worth her salt. It's because grandmothers and grandfathers love well. "It's our way," they would say. They celebrate what is true -- never what is evil.

Fifty percent of the people at that funeral were Amish. They paid for the funeral. They paid for the kids' college education. And when asked, "Why would you do that?" their response was, "Well, it's just our way." When a grandmother tells me the story of her family, and five of the grandkids are doing really well, and one's not doing well at all. And I ask her, "Do you hate him? Are you mad at him? Do you

want to curse him?" "Oh, no, Pastor. I love him. Would you pray for him?" Why do you do that? Well, it's just our way. That's what love looks like. I've seen it in the Amish. I've seen it in grandmothers and grandfathers. I see it in you. Because Christ is in you, and we're gonna do it.

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