

Date of sermon: 5/1/2021  
Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke  
Bible passage or verse: 1 Corinthians 13:7-8  
Title of sermon: Love Looks Out for Others  
Series: What Matters Most - #7

**1 Cor. 13:7-8 (NIV) <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.**

There are a group of people -- you've seen them. But maybe you don't always know what they do. They come early -- to services. They come Wednesday night. They come Sunday morning. I think they -- don't quote me on this, but I think they may come around 7:00 o'clock. The first thing they do is, maybe drive around the facility. We're downtown -- we have some challenges. They get out of their car and they walk around. If there's anyone that needs to be helped up, woke up, you know, kind of get ready, they do that. The next task in their job is a little harder. They clean up anything that's left from the night before. It's not a fun thing, but they do. I don't think I have to be too overly graphic, do I? Their job's not done at that point. They've cleaned up, they've kind of picked things up, they've scoured certain things. Not much here, but in yesterday's sweep, pretty frightening how many needles were picked up over by Rite Aid. So, our team -- they come, and they are all about cleaning and getting everything ready -- safe, for you, when you arrive. They don't stop at that point. In some ways, to be honest with you, their job is just getting started. They are stationed all around our church. Their eyes are always looking. They're trying to find some person maybe that is here with a backpack that might have intentions that aren't helpful to you. They're ready to enter in to a person who spent the entire night drinking and is so inebriated that you and I would be dead, but because they do this on a daily basis they can run around with a point -- you know -- six nine blood alcohol level. And they take them. They've been cursed at; they've been called the best of things. They've had stuff thrown at them. And, you know what the amazing thing is? They don't quit. They show up the next week. They're your security. And they are people who demonstrate a love that just is remarkable to me. With a single passion -- and it is your safety. That's it. I mean, if we paid them \$10,000 a month, I mean, I could -- probably wouldn't be bragging on them as much, but -- the reality is, they're not.

There's another group of people, just like them. I know, it's -- I'm not trying to wade into some political thing. It's just been my experience. These are individuals who wear badges. They have guns. They're police officers. My brother was one for 20-plus years. I was a chaplain for 14 years. I've watched them do things that are -- well, that make no sense. I watched them when one night when they were surrounding a house, and there was a gentleman in the house who had a gun pulled to his wife's head, and I thought for sure -- I just didn't want to look. I was with them as a chaplain, and I didn't want to look in there. I was so afraid I was going to see for the first time somebody shot right in front of me. And that guy was screaming, and he was drunk. She was screaming. And they risked everything -- their life, going home -- to storm that place and to ultimately protect that man from doing something the next day when he was sober, he would hate himself for.

I witnessed one night -- we were at a small apartment. We'd gotten a phone call. The guy was drunk, his girlfriend wanted him to go home. He didn't want to go home -- he wanted to spend the night, she didn't like that. And so, we got there, and everything was fine until he took a quart beer bottle and broke it against the wall, and the next thing you know, he has a razor blade that he is just flinging through the air. You know -- not a one of those officers ran. They didn't run out the door. That guy didn't feel pain that night. They stayed. They protected a woman they didn't know, they helped a man they've never met, and they prevented him from doing something that when he sobered up the next morning he

would hate himself for. Why do they do that? You say, "Well, they get paid." Not enough. They do that because they want a city to be safe. They want you to be able to go for a walk over here in Riverfront Park and not have to carry a gun so that you feel safe. That's why they do that.

When I think of those two groups of people, I think of this passage. I do. I think that's maybe what Paul had in mind when he was describing love, and he says, "It always protects and it always trusts." Now, I understand, you're going to want to contest that "always trusts." Like -- "Yeah, sure. I don't always trust anyone!" Well, hang on. Let's deal with the first one. Paul is helping us stir up within our heart. What does it look like to protect, to bear up with people? And I cannot think in all honesty of a better illustration than what our security team does every week, and our police officers do every day. What do they do? Paul says, they stay. They don't run, they don't hide for cover -- they stay. If you have the NIV, it says, in your text, "Love always protects." If you have another version, ESV and I think NASB and a variety of others, the phrase says, "Love bears all things." So, which one is it? Because it kind of sounds like they're really different. One's a protection and one's a bearing up with each other. And the reality is, both of them are true. And both of them could be nuanced from exactly the same word. And what I mean by that is, love never runs away. It stays when the battle rages. What is the imagery of that? It bears the weight. That's one of the possibilities of this word that Paul is translating, and if you have the ESV and NASB, that's the translation that they chose. And I like that one. I like both of them, actually. But this one is the sense of which it bears with the crushing weight that is coming against it.

If you've ever gotten over to the ocean, and you get to that place where you see a wall, and the pounding waters keep coming into it, and what have they done? They've built a wall. Why? Because if they don't build a wall, the whole -- you know, wall's gonna come down, it's gonna erode -- and so, every day that wall just keeps getting crushed. If you go over sometime and you look at the jetty there that protects the harbor there in Depoe Bay -- what's that jetty there for? It's to protect the entry into that area. Otherwise, boats would never be able to make their way in there. That's what love does, he says -- it stays in the midst of the storm and bears the crushing weight of that which comes against it. It's a wall on the beach. It's a jetty. It's a person.

When Paul was writing to Titus, he said, "Titus, I want you to take care of some churches there in the region that you serve, and what I want you to do is, I want you to appoint some pastors and some elders." And he tells us in chapter 1 -- "This is their assignment. I want them to refute -- I want them to stand against" what? False doctrine. "Titus, it's gonna come. It's gonna come, and it's gonna come raging. It's gonna come against you, and it's gonna come from people you never imagined. It's gonna come from people who you thought had been converted and then they, for whatever reason, recidivised back into their Judaism, and it's gonna come! It's gonna come in places that you're gonna have to take a stand -- just like Paul did, when he was describing his relationship with Peter." Peter was having dinner with some of his friends, and that Peter, who had received that amazing dream from God, that had taken him out of his Judaism, had all of a sudden succumbed to the pressure of his friends. And ah, he went back. Peter went back to that place where he wouldn't have any fellowship with gentiles and he wouldn't have any dinner with gentiles. He wouldn't, you know, eat their meals. And Paul walks in, and he does what? He bears the weight of Peter. "Peter, who's bewitched you?" "Peter, when did you change the nature of the gospel?" It says when Paul's writing to Titus, he said, "I want you to stay. Love stays when the battle rages." You know a person is loving when the wind begins to blow, the waters begin to get choppy, and they start to smile. "I was made for this." That's what love does. It walks into a house. This is not love, like "I have this emotional feeling for you." No. This is, "I love people, and when a woman's life is at risk, I'm going in." Love motivated those guys when Kerri and I were living in the area of Colorado, and the high schools and the pizza parlors, and every one of those things had started to happen. There were officers who risked everything. And -- you wouldn't say that they loved people -- yes, they did. That's exactly what they were doing. Because love stays when the battle rages.

When I think back on our church, I could give you countless illustrations of people. But probably the one that the Holy Spirit brought to my mind was a dear, dear brother that I had never met in my life, but he just kept pestering me, and he'd call me and send me letters. "Hey, have you ever thought about moving to Salem?" "No, Dr. Luther, I've never thought about moving to Salem. I'm living in Fort Collins. Please leave me alone." He'd call me a month later -- "Hey! Yo! I tell you -- I've been praying about you, and I really think, you know," and he just kept at it and kept at it. When I came out here, I understand why he was so persistent. He was persistent in his love for you. Three times, Dr. Luther came in to be our interim pastor. Three times he came in to the middle of a mess. Two of them. He came in -- when the back door was big. He came in when relationships at a leadership level weren't in harmony. And he always had this rare ability to see the good in things. Like -- "Pastor Mark, if you come here, your wife's gonna be the happiest person in the world!" "Why is that?" "Because she can go to Nordstrom's while you're studying with the Scriptures." I feel like sending a little email to Heaven -- "Hey, Dr. Luther -- Nordstrom's closed!" He loved you. He never gave up on you, as hard as it got sometimes. He stayed. He believed in this church. He believed in you. And because of that, he would not stop at anything fighting for the best of this church's future. That's what love does. It stays when the battle rages, and it stays when protection is needed.

The ESV says, "Love bears all things." The NIV says, "Love protects." It's really the same. To bear the crushing weight of an attack is to protect. Your house -- it wasn't supposed to rain last night, at least my weather report said it wasn't supposed to rain last night. And we got .34 inches of rain -- hallelujah! But you know what? I did not get one drop of rain on my head in the middle of the night. My roof loved me. It did! It just sat up there and said, "I'll shield you, Master! I got ya!" And it just ran off all the rain. I woke up -- I was dry as can be. It loved me! Why? Because that's what love does. It protects, it shields, it bears the weight. Like a cargo ship carries, but -- it's not just that, it's a sense of which it stands in defense of.

What does it look like when a friend loves you? It means that they carry your words and keep the good and get rid of the chaff. When a friend loves you, it means they believe the best in you, even on your worst day. It means that you're safe with them and you never have to wonder, "Well, what are they saying behind my back?" No, they love you. They protect you. Bill Thrall said to me years and years ago, "What makes a great team is the same thing that makes a great marriage -- you release each other's strengths and you protect each other's weaknesses." That's what love does. It doesn't lie about it. There's not a person in this room, there's not a person that's ever been created that doesn't have both a combination of great strengths and also weaknesses. Love doesn't -- isn't blind to the weaknesses. Barnabas wasn't blind to the fact that John Mark had some "quit" in him. Barnabas wasn't blind to the fact that John Mark started things better than he finished things. Barnabas was absolutely aware that John Mark was a little impulsive, and periodically said "Yes" to things that he had no intention of finishing. But he also saw the beauty of that young man, and he protected him. He believed in him. Love stays. And it says that you're gonna be safe with me. Not perfect, but you're gonna be safe with me. Can you imagine living in a world where that happens? Can you imagine living in a marriage where that happens? Can you imagine making that your goal in a church that you go to, where I will enter into a relationship with these people and I will do my absolute level best to protect them. And in fact, I will even protect the ones that I may not get along with. But love isn't choosy. It doesn't say, "Love protects those that they love." It just says, "Love protects." "It bears all things."

The second part of that, he says something that at first seems a little weird. And to be quite honest with you -- hard. Again, the NIV and the ESV are going to come down a little different on this one. My text says, "Love always protects, and it always trusts." Some of you have the version that says, "Always believes." Now -- I don't know about you, but there's no way that you want to enter into this world and say, "Man, I'm gonna trust everybody. I'm gonna take everyone at face value." I don't think anyone does that. I mean, if you do, you're gonna be in trouble. Because I went back, and I looked at some of the greatest lies in marketing. And I didn't even know some of these existed, but Rice Krispies once told

us that if you eat Rice Krispies it will increase your child's immunity system. We -- I read that, and I thought, "Good grief! We could've eliminated COVID way back if we would've just had Rice Krispies for everyone!" I looked at another one. "One-a-day vitamins will prevent prostate cancer." Now, wait a minute -- how do these people get away with this stuff? There was an electric shock that will cure AIDS. Now, you say, "Oh, that must have been way back in the twenties and thirties." I'm sorry, we didn't have AIDS on the planet. I mean, you know, we did, I'm sure -- but I mean, it wasn't an issue back in the twenties and thirties, right? Think back when AIDS came in in the eighties. Probably some scientists and nurses and doctors were dealing with it much earlier than that, but in terms of a mass scale, it was much later than that. And yet, they were suggesting that there was an electric shock. There was a face cream that promises, "We will make you as good as if you've been photoshopped." I doubt that. And this is a great one -- I love this one. "Listerine -- it will cure your dandruff." I was thinking -- huh, do you drink Head and Shoulders? What are you doing? Well, I started looking at all these things. It's like, no wonder why somebody said, "Wait -- time out." Trust everyone? Are you kidding me? I mean, man on the street'll lie to you on any given moment! Yeah, it will. So Paul, what on earth are you trying to tell us when you say, "It always trusts" or "It always believes"?

You see, I think there's -- and this is where it gets a little hard. There's an objective aspect of trust. I trust Jeff. I have objective evidence. I trust those chairs. I have objective evidence -- I've sat in them. I didn't sit there and look at that chair tonight and think, "Huh. I wonder if I'm gonna commit to you tonight." No, I have objective evidence. But there's another aspect of trust, and this is what Paul's talking about here. It's the subjective aspect of it. It's not that I trust you, but it's I believe in you. Love always believes in who they can become. Why do I go down that path? Because Paul is writing to the Corinthian church, remember. The Corinthian church had some huge problems. They had problems of lawsuits with each other, they had problems of schismic splits in the church, they had problems where people were dying when they were taking the communion table, they had problems of unruly worship service -- but if you go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, what does Paul introduce? "To the sanctified believers in Corinth, to those who are holy. To those whom I give thanks." Now, either Paul's a liar and is giving them just flattery to butter them up before he tears them down, or he says, "I believe in you." "It's not that I'm happy with where you're at -- I believe in what God can do in your life. I believe in where you're headed. I believe in the yielding of your spirit. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. I believe that God working in your life can completely overhaul you to a place that you won't even recognize yourself. I trust for you."

See, that's not the objective part -- that's the subjective part. That's my question of my own heart -- am I going to approach people in this church in that way? Am I going to trust what God can do in them? Or am I going to keep the wound that they give me, am I going to see them through the lens of their phrase, am I going to jettison them because they don't measure up to what I expect of that person? Or will I be able to say, like Paul, "Love believes in who they can be." Was he a liar? Or was he a person who had an insatiable passion to believe in the potential of God's love in you?

CS Lewis in his wonderful, book, *The Weight of Glory*, says there are no ordinary Christians. There's no ordinary Christians. If you can imagine what a person can be like, then you love them to that end. You bear up with them. You carry the weight of their journey. You protect them from the battles. But you believe in where God's taking them. That's love. You're gonna get dirty -- just like a police officer. You're gonna get spit upon. You're gonna be misunderstood. You're gonna be accused. But love stays. It fights through that, because it sees a vision of where that person can become and says, "I want to stay with you." Love stays.

Can I ask you a question? Who have you given up on? Who have you just written off -- for whatever reason? Who have you said, "I'm done with them"? Who have you said, "Never again"? Can I ask you a question? If the Lord Jesus were to ask you tonight, "Love them," are you willing? Are you willing to

bear the weight of the wind against them? Are you willing to protect them? Are you willing to shield them? And are you willing to believe in who they can become?

Rick McKinley -- a book he wrote a number of years ago -- it's called *Jesus in the Margins* -- was describing a young lady that he had met early on in his ministry up in Portland. Her name was Tiffany. Tiffany was describing herself when she said, "I hate men. I hate what they've done to me. I hate men." When Rick started to minister to her in their church, Tiffany wasn't very nice. She was rather boisterous about the fact that she took her hatred out on men by having sex with them. Playing with them. Manipulating them. Just messing with them. She said, "I don't mind you having my body -- you'll never get my heart, because," she said, "I hate men." What would cause a person to do that? You probably know. From the age of nine to the age of 12, she was abused by a family member. She wasn't always easy to be around. When you hate men, and you're a pastor, sometimes she took it out on him. She said some really schism mean things. A season had gone by. Tiffany wrote this -- "I'm always amazed at how God has met me in the deepest parts of me. I realize that God has loved me the whole time. The abuse taught me that I was worthless, but Christ has taught me that I'm precious to Him. The greatest thing is that in His love, I could really forgive the person who hurt me, and to eventually move on. Moving on is a daily thing for me. I can't say that it's cut and dried and that the pain is all gone forever. But it's different now. I'm still single, but I don't give myself away to guys anymore. I see now that the love that I was looking for can only be found in Jesus. I'm a grateful daughter who is just trying to stay in my Father's love." You know how she got there? It was the love of Christ, and a church who imperfectly, when the waves would crush against her and she against others, they stayed. Just like a cop that would run into a building to save a woman he doesn't know, and to keep a husband from doing something that in the morning he would hate. Just like a volunteer on the security team who would come here and be spit upon, clean everything up, deal with vile language, because they love you. Love stays. It stays put, and it bears with people, offering them protection and trust. It's gritty. How about you?

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