

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Epistle, Year A

GENUINE LOVE

Romans 12:9-21

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Glenn L. Monson

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.[a] 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;[b] do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God;[c] for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

DIAGNOSIS: Overcome by Evil

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): My Love Is Not Genuine

Yes, I am a member of the household of God, one who is able to call others "brothers and sisters" in the faith, and yet I

continue to set my mind on the things of the flesh. My love for others is not genuine. I resist giving to the needy. I do not show hospitality to strangers. I do not bless my persecutors, and the list goes on.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): My Love Is Only for Self

Beyond mere actions, my inner life is also conflicted. I flag in zeal, am listless in spirit, am not patient in suffering, and I fail to persevere in prayer. I am wise in my own eyes, and I do not rejoice in the Lord's glory, but in my own. In short, my trust continues to be in self, not in Christ.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): God's Love Forgotten

As I continue in the way of the flesh, forgetting that I am now under grace and not the law, evil has its way with me. I forget that the Lord alone gets to say, "vengeance is mine"; and I seek to repay evil with evil. It is a continual downward spiral and I am lost.

PROGNOSIS: Evil Overcome

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Christ's Love Is Genuine

God does what we cannot do: God condemns sin in our flesh so that "the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us." Christ's genuine love causes him to die for us while we are still sinners, and we are transformed.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Genuine Repentance

Being transformed by Christ's genuine love I am no longer conformed to the world, but find myself being drawn to love God and neighbor. I am free to excel in showing honor to others. I am at peace with myself and God, which in turn leads to peace with all.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Genuine Love

Christ's love begins to flow through me to others. I hate what is evil and embrace what is good. I leave room for God's wrath, and am no longer overcome with the desire to fight evil with evil, but rather evil with good. Loving others with mutual affection is my way of life. I have been overcome by Christ's genuine love for all, and Christ's love overflows through me more and more.