

The Love Trap
 Rev. Dr. Carrie Kreps Wegenast
 Church of the Saviour UMC, Montgomery, Ohio
 October 26, 2025
 [Text: 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8a, 13]

I have this mighty challenge to talk about love. And money. Markus? What in the world have you set me up for?

It will become very obvious today, if you are not already aware, that I am Markus' wife. I'm also ordained in the UMC and serve in extension ministry as a manufacturing chaplain. You will hear more about that in a little while too. Markus and I have been married for twenty-one years, have two children together, and consider ourselves a bilanguage and bicultural household since Markus is German and I'm from the US. He was the foreign exchange student, by the way.

When we were planning our wedding and incorporating cultural customs, we were also seminary students planning careers as pastors in the Methodist church. We were well aware that 1 Corinthians 13 was a popular and appropriate choice for a wedding scripture reading. We didn't pick it. It felt cliché for two theologians-in-training to use something so traditional. I recently remarked to Markus, "do you notice how we often do things the hard way to avoid the traditional path?"

That said, I have a bad habit of zoning out whenever a familiar scripture is read. It's like my brain assumes it's got this and can focus on something else. 1 Corinthians 13 is most known as the wedding scripture. Why? Because it talks about love. The first verses of this chapter illustrate the importance of having love. In our speech. In our faith. In our actions. In fact, it says that if we don't have love our speech is like a noisy gong – pointless. Our faith may be able to move mountains but if we are not guided by love, then we are nothing. If we give away everything and act in the most righteous ways, but do not do so out of love, we gain nothing.

[slide – list of what love is]

The middle verses describe love. Patient, kind, without envy, boasting or arrogance, rudeness, collaborative, (have you zoned out yet), and love doesn't keep score.

When I read these words and think of committed romantic relationships, I fluctuate between the unattainableness of this list and the desire to try. Nod your head if you have experienced times in your loving relationships when lack of patience, score keeping or envy were your noted feelings?

Take a look at this list again. How obtainable is this? This is when we pause to reflect on the why, instead of the to do. The writer says we can speak, we can have faith, we can have action, but love runs through our speech, our faith, and our actions. For this reason, love is the greatest. It is the common denominator.

All month we are looked at stewardship from the perspective of Church of the Saviour's vision statement. "A family of believers being transformed by Christ, dedicated to growing spiritually, living generously, and loving courageously."

[slide – vision statement]

Love threads through everything else we have talked about this month. Without love, there is no reason to be in this space, making a commitment to this church, and saying, God, in my love for you, I will live my life for you. I will grow spiritually. I will live generously. I will love courageously.

Either our speech, faith and actions are rooted in love OR

we are like noisy gong, are nothing and have nothing.

Maybe you have heard the rumors about my job. I'm not going to name drop the company I work for. It is sufficient to say for this livestreamed and recorded sermon that I work for a large food manufacturing company as a workplace chaplain. Hearing this now or before, you might say, "Wait, what? They have chaplains?"

Yes. Yes, they do. My role is to provide the emotional, mental and spiritual care for all team members. We bring our whole person to work.

For example, our faith practices. Ramadan is a really exciting time in our plant as TMs' days revolve around fasting and visiting the mosque for prayer.

For example, celebrations. Baby showers are a specialty at the plant and I love the delicious potluck that is a part of these celebrations for new moms and dads.

For example, barriers to employment. Transportation, mental health, financial gaps, English literacy, to name a few.

The bottom line of my job is always about money – how do I save the company money by stabilizing the workforce? I do this by caring for people.

Sometime ago one of our team members suffered a personal health crisis at work. EMS was called and they were stabilized. I was called to the room where they were and I found their spouse standing outside the door. The spouse also works with us and had been called by a friend who witnessed the crisis. I held their arm, arranged for a chair, engaged them in distracting conversation, organized a ride to the hospital and then worked to debrief the responders and witnesses.

A few days later the spouse contact me. In their faith tradition, they believe that a crisis can result in the spirit leaving one's body. This event can lead to poor health or unrest after death. They were requesting a religious accommodation to bring their religious leader to the plant to pray in the space where their loved one had fallen ill in order to bring peace to their spirit.

We invited the family in, assured their privacy, and gave the family what I hope was peace in their sorrow.

Either our speech, faith and actions are rooted in love OR

we are like a noisy gong, are nothing and have nothing.

A man was hired to pack product into boxes. The line where he worked ran a very specific product that was required to be packed six to a bag and then twelve bags to a box. In his first few days on the line his lead noticed that sometimes he would put 5 in the bag, sometimes 7,

sometimes more or less. He was inconsistent. The lead explained the count. The TM continued to miss count.

The lead advised the hourly trainer, a woman who helps new hires understand their jobs and provides instruction during the team members' first several months. The hourly trainer worked with the team member on counting. He would have it while the trainer was present but quickly lose count when the trainer walked away.

The trainer's manager asked me for thoughts. We discussed literacy, communication, and possible head trauma. In the end, maintenance was asked to create a tube for the man. It was exactly the length of six patties. It enabled him to count out the number visually and slip the correct number into the bag.

Either our speech, faith and actions are rooted in love OR

we are like a noisy gong, are nothing and have nothing.

I recently had the opportunity to sit in the room with a CEO of a Fortune 100 company. He was asked what was the number one thing the group gathered there could do to impact the business. The CEO quoted 1 Corinthians 13. He said, and I paraphrase, if you read that, there is a list of ten things you shouldn't do. There are three things you should do – have faith, have hope, and love. Love is the greatest. The CEO paused and then added, "I would ask you to go love on people – with great curiosity, not judgement."

Either our speech, faith and actions are rooted in love OR

we are like a noisy gong, are nothing and have nothing.

When I moved into the role at my current plant I was asked if I could organize a Financial Literacy class. We launched this week and are covering money management, banking, building assets, how to use one's health benefits, household budgets, cost of borrowing, and protecting your money. In the opening lesson, my co-teacher held up a unicycle.

[slide – unicycle]

He pointed out the spokes and invited the class members to see these as representative of important things in their life – family, health, safety, housing, food, friends. He then pointed to the center of the spokes and noted that this is where our beliefs and values rest – God, higher power, Creator. Money, he added, is the rim. It supports the tire. We need money to care for our health, connect our family, ensure our safety, buy food, and have housing.

Our goal is to have a smooth ride. If a spoke disconnects, it can get bumpy. If the tire wears thin, it can get bumpy. If we move away from our beliefs and values, everything else runs the risk of getting out of alignment.

Today is Consecration Day. It turns out it is a good day to talk about love. Our Speech. Our Faith. Our Actions must be rooted in LOVE. Our speech is our intention. Our faith is our purpose. Our actions are a physical response. Another way to read this is the COS vision – growing spiritually (FAITH), living generously (ACTION), loving courageously (LOVE). Without love, it is nothing. It's like a noisy gong. Amen.

Benediction

Either our speech, faith and actions are rooted in love OR

we are like a noisy gong, are nothing and have nothing. May we go forth to Love. Amen.