Summary: "Shared Suffering" – Ron Dart

Central message: Shared suffering, when met with genuine love, compassion, attentiveness, and personal involvement, does not diminish love. It increases it. A Christian congregation should become a community where people share not only beliefs and worship, but also one another's burdens, sorrows, work, time, and lives.

The sermon argues that love is not merely something we profess or understand intellectually. It is something we experience, demonstrate, receive, and cultivate through our relationships.

1. The loss of loved ones can deepen a community's love

- Death and bereavement affect an entire congregation, not just the immediate family.
- We often feel helpless when someone experiences a loss.
- Prayer, expressions of kindness, sympathy, a listening ear, and even a hug can provide meaningful comfort.
- The loss of a person does not necessarily diminish the love within a congregation.
- Death can actually provide an opportunity to refresh and strengthen the community's reservoir of love.
- By contrast, harsh words, harsh judgments, neglect, apathy, and carelessness diminish that reservoir.

Key thought: A congregation's love can grow through the way its members respond to one another's suffering.

2. Love can sustain people through extraordinary suffering

The sermon draws heavily on Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, recounting his experiences in Nazi concentration camps.

Frankl described how:

- Despite terrible physical circumstances, his inner spiritual life could deepen.
- Thinking about his wife sustained him during forced marches and brutal working conditions.
- He mentally conversed with her, remembered her smile, and drew strength from her image.
- He realized that love goes beyond the physical presence of the person loved.
- Even without knowing whether his wife was alive, his love for her remained meaningful and sustaining.

The sermon connects Frankl's experience with Song of Solomon 8:6:

"For love is as strong as death..."

Key thought: Love can transcend physical separation, terrible circumstances, and even death. Its strength is not dependent upon the physical presence of the person loved.

3. The church is intended to be a community of love

Jesus promised to build His Church, and the sermon suggests that one of its essential purposes is to remain a community of love in a world where love seems increasingly scarce.

- Love should be a defining characteristic of the Church.
- Love should be experienced in both the church and the family.
- The Church should provide companionship and support when people feel alone in a spiritually dry and thirsty world.
- Members need one another, particularly during difficult times.

- Suffering provides opportunities for people to demonstrate the love that binds them together.

Key scriptures:

- Matthew 16:18 – Christ building His Church.
- Romans 8:35–39 – Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ.
- Psalm 63:1–8 – Longing for God in a dry and thirsty land.

4. Shared suffering increases love rather than diminishing it

One of the sermon's central principles

The speaker makes a particularly important observation:

Shared suffering increases love. It does not diminish it.

He describes how sitting with someone who is suffering, holding their hand, or placing an arm around their shoulder can strengthen the love between people.

He extends this principle beyond suffering:

- Shared pain.
- Shared suffering.
- Shared work.
- Shared projects.
- Shared time.
- Shared play.
- Shared food.
- Shared fellowship.

All of these experiences contribute to what he calls the **reservoir of love**.

The more attentive we are to God, our families, and our brothers and sisters, the more that reservoir grows.

Key thought: Love grows through shared experiences and personal involvement, not simply through shared beliefs.

5. Superficial love is inadequate when trials arrive

The sermon warns against what it describes as sanctimonious or pseudo-love.

This is love that:

- Exists primarily in words.
- Never develops into meaningful action.
- Does not extend beyond superficial expressions.
- Is not demonstrated when people experience hardship.
- Fails to provide meaningful support when someone is hurting.

It is easy to express affection when everything is going well. Difficult circumstances reveal whether our love has genuine substance.

Key thought: Trials expose the difference between professed love and demonstrated love.

6. Judgments and criticism damage the reservoir of love

The sermon applies the reservoir illustration to relationships within a congregation.

It identifies several ways people damage their community:

- Judging one another unnecessarily.
- Muttering criticism privately.
- Focusing on another person's shortcomings.
- Neglecting opportunities to help.

- Allowing negative opinions to develop without speaking directly to the person concerned.

An interesting observation is that the problem with some judgments is not necessarily that they are incorrect, but that they are pointless.
If a concern is legitimate, speaking directly and constructively with the person may produce something beneficial.
Otherwise, criticism simply creates cracks in the reservoir.
The speaker makes a particularly constructive observation:
Our brothers' foibles are an opportunity to add water to the reservoir.
In other words, another person's weaknesses can become opportunities to demonstrate patience, kindness, understanding, and love.

7. We need to receive love, not merely give it

The sermon offers an interesting interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13.
It asks listeners to consider the passage from the perspective of someone who is *without receiving love*.
For example:

- Having great speaking ability but being without love leaves a person spiritually impoverished.
- Having knowledge and understanding but being without love leaves a person with nothing.
- Giving everything to the poor but living without love leaves a person without meaningful relational fulfillment.

The speaker emphasizes that people need to be recipients of patience, kindness, and genuine affection.
He illustrates this through his own ministry: delivering a sermon is not enough. He needs to remain afterward, interact with people, and be present when they experience grief.
Key thought: Congregational love requires both giving love and making ourselves available to receive and experience the love of others.

8. Love is something we must practice, not merely understand

One of the sermon's strongest challenges is that love is not simply another doctrine to prove.
Although Scripture tells us to prove all things, love is not established merely by presenting arguments and lists of Bible verses.
Love is a way of living and interacting with people.
It must become visible:

- In families.
- In congregations.
- In personal relationships.
- In difficult circumstances.
- In the ways we treat people who are difficult to love.

The speaker emphasizes that love is particularly important when the person receiving it is not naturally lovable.
Key scriptures:

- 1 Corinthians 13:1–13.
- John 13:34–35.
- John 15:12–13.

9. Jesus established the ultimate example of shared love and sacrifice

The sermon connects Jesus' sacrifice with the responsibility of Christians to love one another.

John 15:12–13 provides the foundation:

"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

And:

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

The speaker emphasizes several things:

- Jesus sacrificed Himself for people who were not necessarily easy to love.
- His sacrifice demonstrates the greatest expression of love.
- Christians are expected to learn to love others in the same manner.
- Loving difficult people is an essential test of Christian character.
- The identifying characteristic of Jesus' disciples is their love for one another.

The challenge is not simply whether we love our friends, but whether we can love people who are difficult, frustrating, imperfect, or demanding.

10. Learning to sacrifice begins with five minutes at a time

The sermon concludes with a very practical approach to developing sacrificial love.

We may find the idea of laying down our lives for others intimidating. However, the speaker suggests that we learn this through small, repeated sacrifices.

Examples include:

- Taking five minutes to write a personal sympathy card.
- Thinking carefully about someone experiencing a loss.
- Writing something meaningful rather than merely signing our name.
- Giving someone our time.
- Staying afterward to talk.
- Making ourselves available when someone needs companionship.

We gradually learn to give five minutes, then ten minutes, then an hour, and eventually an entire day.

Key thought: Great acts of love are often developed through many small acts of personal sacrifice.

The sermon's major themes at a glance

Theme	**Main lesson**
Death and loss	Can refresh a community's love
Shared suffering	Strengthens love between people
Shared experiences	Build a reservoir of love
Attentiveness	Demonstrates genuine concern
Compassion	Requires personal involvement
Criticism	Can damage relationships
Forgiveness and patience	Turn weaknesses into opportunities for love

Fellowship	Provides support in a spiritually dry world
Receiving love	Is as important as giving love
Sacrifice	Begins with small investments of time
Jesus' example	Establishes the standard for Christian love
Congregational unity	Is strengthened through demonstrated love

11. Particularly important scriptures in the sermon

Scripture	**Connection to the message**
Song of Solomon 8:6–7	Love is strong as death; many waters cannot quench it.
Romans 8:35–39	Suffering and even death cannot separate us from God's love.
Psalm 63:1–8	God sustains us in spiritually dry and difficult circumstances.
1 Corinthians 13:1–13	Love must be present and experienced in our lives.
John 13:34–35	Love for one another identifies Christ's disciples.
John 15:12–13	Jesus commands sacrificial love and demonstrates it.

12. The five biggest takeaways

I would reduce Ron Dart's entire sermon to these five principles:

1. **Love grows through shared experiences.** Sharing suffering, work, time, food, fellowship, and joy builds relationships.
2. **Love must become tangible.** Genuine love involves presence, attention, compassion, and personal sacrifice.
3. **People need to experience being loved.** It is not enough to talk about loving others; people must actually receive that love.
4. **Difficulties reveal and develop love.** Trials expose superficial relationships but also provide opportunities to deepen genuine affection.
5. **Love is built through small sacrifices.** Learning to give five minutes at a time prepares us for much greater expressions of sacrificial love.

My observation: The underlying message

One particularly significant idea in this sermon is the metaphor of the **reservoir of love**.

A congregation is not necessarily loving simply because its members share the same doctrines, attend the same services, or belong to the same organization.

It becomes a community of love when its members continually contribute to one another's lives.

The reservoir of love

Adding water

- Sharing suffering and sorrow
- Giving time and attention
- Listening and understanding

- Sharing work and projects
- Encouraging and comforting
- Forgiving and showing patience
- Sharing meals and fellowship

Losing water

- Harsh words and judgments
- Neglect and apathy
- Unnecessary criticism
- Self-centeredness
- Superficial expressions of affection
- Withholding companionship

A stronger reservoir of love

A congregation whose members become increasingly connected through the experiences of living, serving, suffering, and loving together.

An especially important implication: Shared suffering is not something a congregation should merely endure. It is an opportunity to develop deeper relationships that might otherwise never develop.

And perhaps the most challenging question raised by this sermon is:

If someone in our congregation were going through the most difficult experience of their life, would they experience our love as something real, personal, and sustaining—or would they primarily hear us talking about love?

That question captures the heart of Ron Dart's message.

Shared Suffering - Ron Dart

0:00: 4 deaths in such a short period of time right to our little congregation can be kind of hard to take.
0:07: Not so very long ago, we lost Jim Ross, one of our own, to cancer.
0:13: Then John Reedy lost his brother.
0:17: Then, his father, just a week ago, a little over, and John Harris this last week painfully lost a son.
0:25: And then on Thursday afternoon, I stepped out of my office and ran into Larry, who said, Kitty's mother just died.
0:33: I know our prayers go out to all of these, and I know we want to do all we can to help, but to be honest, There isn't a lot we can do.
0:42: We can pray, and I know we do.
0:46: We can be there for those who are bereaved, and I know we want to.
0:50: I know we sometimes feel a little helpless and we don't really know what to say to those who are bereaved.
0:58: Expressions of sorrow, of kindness, of love are always in place and are often very comforting.
1:09: Sometimes a hug is all you can give, but that's a lot, really, at the right time in the right place.
1:16: Last night when I was reflecting on this, At first I thought maybe the loss of a loved one.
1:23: was a net loss to the love in our community.
1:27: But on second thought, I don't think so.
1:29: There is a reservoir of love in a community of believers that is not diminished.
1:36: By death.
1:38: It can be diminished by harsh, hard words.
1:41: It can be diminished by harsh judgments.
1:45: It can be diminished by neglect, apathy, carelessness.
1:51: But not by death Death, in fact, gives us a chance to refresh the reservoir of love in church and in family.
2:02: There's a passage in the, in the Song of Solomon.
2:04: It, it's kind of a strange thing that he says here, and I don't think I really understood it for a long time.
2:12: It's in the 8th chapter of the Song of Songs in chapter chapter 8, verse 6.
2:17: Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death.
2:27: Love is strong as death.
2:30: Jealousy is as cruel as the grave.
2:32: The coals thereof are like coals of fire with the most vehement blame.
2:37: Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.
2:45: If a man would give all his substance, all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.
2:52: For you can't, of course, find love that way.
2:56: Now, I never really understood this reference.
2:59: Until I read Viktor Frankl's book, Man's Search for Meaning.

3:04: Now, I know I have referred to it more than once.
3:07: I hope that you will forgive me once again because it is so very apt.
3:13: At this time, I would like to read a little bit of it into the record, as it were.
3:18: This is from Viktor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning.
3:22: And I'm going to start reading on page 47.
3:25: For those of you who don't know who he is, Viktor Frankl was a Jewish psychotherapist, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, in fact, an MD who was, along with other Jews, herded off to the concentration camp in the war, handed a pick or a shovel or a hoe or a mattock, and sent out to do manual labor.
3:44: He says in the beginning of verse 40, page 47 of the book, in spite of all the enforced physical and mental primitiveness of life in a concentration camp, it was possible for spiritual life to deepen.
3:59: Sensitive people who were used to a rich intellectual life may have suffered much pain because they were of a delicate constitution, but the damage to their inner selves was less.
4:13: They were able to retreat from their terrible surroundings to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom.
4:19: Only in this way can one explain the apparent paradox that some prisoners of a less hardy makeup seemed often to survive camp life better than those of a more robust nature.
4:33: In order to make myself clear, I am forced to fall back on personal experience.
4:37: Let me tell you what happened on those early mornings when we had to march to our work site.
4:43: There were shouted commands, detachment, forward, march, left, 234, and then it went.
4:51: First man about left and left, left and left, caps off, these words sound in my ears, he said, even now.
5:00: At the order caps off, we passed the gate of the camp and searchlights were trained upon us.
5:05: Whoever did march, did not march smartly got a kick, and worse off was the man who, because of the cold, had pulled his cap back over his ears before permission was given.
5:17: We stumbled on in the darkness over big stones through large puddles along the one road leading from the camp.
5:25: The accompanying guards kept shouting at us and driving us with the butts of their rifles.
5:31: Anyone with very sore feet supported himself on his neighbor's arm.
5:37: Hardly a word was spoken.
5:39: The icy wind did not encourage talk.
5:43: Hiding his mouth behind his upturned collar, the man marching next to me whispered suddenly, If our wives could see us now.
5:53: I hope they are better off in their camps and don't know what's happening to us.
5:59: That brought to mind, brought thoughts of my own wife to mind, and we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and onward.
6:10: Nothing was said, but we both knew.
6:12: Each of us was thinking of his wife.

6:17: Occasionally I looked at the sky where the stars were fading and the pink light of the morning was beginning to spread behind a dark bank of clouds, but my my mind clung to my wife's image, imagining it with an uncanny acuteness.
6:32: I heard her answering me, saw her smile, her frank and encouraging look.
6:39: Real or not, her look was then more luminous than the sun, which was beginning to rise.
6:47: A thought transfixed me.
6:49: For the first time in my life, I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers.
7:01: The truth that love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire.
7:09: Then I grasp the meaning of the great secret of human poetry and human thought and belief have to to impart.
7:17: The salvation of men is through love.
7:21: And in love I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment in the contemplation of his beloved.
7:33: In a position of utter desolation, when man cannot express himself in positive action, when his only achievement may consist in enduring his sufferings in the right way, in an honorable way.
7:46: In such a position, a man can through loving contemplation of the image he carries of his beloved achieve fulfillment.
7:56: For the first time in my life, I was able to understand the meaning of the words.
8:02: The angels are lost in perpetual contemplation of an infinite glory.
8:10: The man in front of me stopped and stumbled, and those following him fell on top of him.
8:15: The guard rushed over and used his whip on all of them.
8:18: My thoughts were interrupted for a few minutes, but soon my soul found its way back from the prisoner's existence.
8:25: To another world, and I resumed talk with my beloved loved one.
8:29: I asked her questions and she answered.
8:32: She questioned me in return, and I answered.
8:35: Stop.
8:36: We arrived at our work site.
8:38: Everybody rushed into the dark, the dark hut in the hope of getting a fairly decent tool.
8:43: Each prisoner got a spade or a pickaxe.
8:46: Can't you hurry up, you pigs?
8:49: Soon we had resumed the previous day's positions in the ditch.
8:53: The frozen ground cracked under the point of the pickaxes, and sparks flew.
8:57: The men were silent, their brains numb.
9:02: My mind still clung to the image of my wife.
9:08: A thought crossed my mind.
9:10: I didn't even know if she were alive.
9:13: I knew only one thing which I have learned well by now love goes far beyond the physical person of the beloved.
9:22: It finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self, whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is even alive at all, ceases to be of importance.

9:35: Now that's hard to get our mind around.
9:38: But here's a man who in extremists, in most, the most incredibly difficult circumstances that I can even imagine.
9:46: managed to hang on to his love for his wife and his love for his wife, his memory of her, his thoughts of her, his conversations with her, even though they took place in his mind, all carried him forward.
10:00: I did not know whether my wife was alive, and I had no means of finding out.
10:06: During all my prison life there was no outgoing or incoming mail, but at that moment it ceased to matter.
10:13: There was no need for me to know.
10:15: Nothing could touch the strength of my love, my thoughts, the image of my beloved.
10:21: Had I known then that my wife was dead, which she was, by the way.
10:26: I think that I still would have given myself undisturbed by that knowledge to the contemplation of her image and that my mental conversation with her would have been just as vivid and just as satisfying.
10:39: Set me like a seal upon your heart, for your love is strong as death.
10:48: Later on, he says in a last violent protest against the hopelessness of imminent death.
10:55: I sensed my soul spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom.
10:59: I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world, and from somewhere I heard a victorious yes in answer to my question of the existence of an ultimate purpose.
11:11: At that moment, a light was lit in a distant farmhouse that stood right on the horizon as if painted there in the midst of the, the miserable gray of a dawning morning in Bavaria.
11:22: And the light shines in the darkness came to mind.
11:26: For hours I stood hacking the dry ground.
11:29: The guard passed by insulting me, and once again I communed with my beloved.
11:33: More and more I felt that she was present, that she was with me.
11:36: I had the feeling I was able to touch her, able to stretch out my hand and grasp hers.
11:41: The feeling was very strong.
11:43: She was there.
11:45: Then at that very moment, a bird flew down silently and perched just in front of me on the heap of soil which I had dug up from the ditch and looked steadily at me.
11:58: Sometimes you wonder about things that happen.
12:02: You see them develop and you experience things like this man experienced in the heart of the worst circumstances that I can possibly imagine would ever affect my life.
12:12: Day by day, I think we forget all too easily how much we love one another.
12:20: And sometimes it takes death before we really know how much we love one another.
12:26: I pray that none of us will ever experience the extremes that Viktor Frankl endured, but should we ever.
12:33: I pray that we will all find the love to help us endure.
12:38: We all know that Jesus promised that he would build his church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it, and it occurred to me that our Lord intended for the church to be to become a community of love in the midst of a world that frankly doesn't seem to reflect very much of it in which the overall commodity of love seems to be diminishing by the day, that within that world, the church would remain a community of love.

13:08: And also that he intended us to understand that love is stronger than the gates of hell, which is one of the reasons why the church is able to stand, and this is just as true of a family as it is of a church.
13:24: I want to remind you of a familiar scripture, and I hope in the light of what I've said that it will go a little deeper into your heart perhaps than it has before.
13:31: It's Romans the 8th chapter.
13:33: The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and asked them this, verse 35, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
13:42: Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?
13:52: Now, think for a moment about Viktor Frankl in the concentration camp and his wife.
13:56: Tribulation, distress, and all of that, the rest of it did not separate him from the love of his wife.
14:03: Even though she was dead, her love was not, and she reached out through that love to him and it was strengthening, to strengthened him.
14:12: Now, why would we think then that these things that are listed here would separate us from the love of Christ?
14:19: What does it mean then also who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
14:25: He went on to say in verse 36, as it is written, for your sake, we are killed all the day long.
14:31: We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
14:34: It is like a bunch of sheep, they herd us in there and kill us all.
14:37: No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
15:01: Nothing's going to make that separation.
15:03: Now, have you ever thought about why this is?
15:07: Why is it so?
15:10: Because it is a truth of human suffering that is of human existence that we know that shared suffering increases love, it does not diminish it.
15:22: Now I don't know if you've experienced it in your life.
15:24: I hope you haven't suffered enough to have experienced it in any great depth, but the truth is that shared suffering does increase love.
15:34: It does not diminish it.
15:36: I can't, I've never had anything huge in the way of this, but I've had enough little things that have happened in the course of my ministry in my life of the sharing, and this is strange, in the, of the sharing perhaps more often of someone else's suffering.
15:53: And sitting there with them, perhaps holding a hand, perhaps putting an arm on the shoulder.
15:59: All these things have made the love that I have shared with these people stronger.
16:04: It has not in any way diminished it.
16:07: Shared pain, shared suffering, shared work.
16:14: Shared projects, shared time, even shared play and shared food, all these things add to the reservoir of love in an otherwise dry and thirsty land.

16:29: In a very real sense, to our, you know, toward God, toward our family, and toward our brothers, our attentiveness.
16:38: Adds to the, to the reservoir of love that is between us.
16:44: In Psalm 63.
16:46: David wrote this song when he was out in the middle of the desert, the middle of no man's land.
16:53: And he wrote, oh God, you are my God, early will I seek you.
16:59: My soul thirsts for you.
17:01: My flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.
17:09: And there are times I think in this world that we can very much feel the same way ourselves.
17:13: We are in the desert, we're alone, and we're like people, like a, a, a, a bird in a dry and thirsty land with no water anywhere to be found.
17:21: And it's at times like this when our soul longs that the way in which we are led to water.
17:28: is through family and through church.
17:32: And the importance of being together, of leaning on one another in times of trial, is what leads us through.
17:40: He said, I long to see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in the sanctuary because your love is better than life, my lips will praise you.
17:53: Thus will I bless you while I live.
17:56: I will lift up my hands in your name.
17:58: My soul shall be satisfied like marrow and fatness.
18:01: My mouth shall praise you with joyful lips.
18:05: When I remember you on my bed.
18:08: I meditate on you in the night watches because you have been my help.
18:14: Therefore, in the shadow of your wings, I will rejoice.
18:17: My soul follows hard after you.
18:21: Your right hand upholds me.
18:24: But those who seek my soul to destroy it shall go down into the lower parts of the earth.
18:30: And Viktor Frankel survived.
18:32: A lot of his guards did not.
18:36: They shall fall by the sword.
18:37: They shall be apportioned for foxes, but the kings of the earth shall rejoice in God.
18:42: Everyone that swears by Him shall glory, but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.
18:51: You know, there is a sanctimonious kind of pseudo-love that is inadequate to the day of trial.
19:00: It just simply will not carry, carry through the, the pretense, the merely, the mere words, the expressions that don't go any deeper and don't get any further than just the lips and don't even reach the eyes.
19:13: They just won't make it to the hour of trial.
19:16: The thing that begins to make a difference though, is when the trial really hits, and when the test really comes is when you find out.

19:25: Now, I already said I'm not talking solely about the church because this is just as true of the family as it is of the church.
19:32: When there is a divorce, for example, the dam is breached.
19:36: And love is lost.
19:38: The mother will still love her children.
19:41: That reservoir of love, it seems, lasts beyond just about anything, but the man is a great loser in those situations in ways that he does not even know.
19:54: He thinks that he's been able to walk away from a burden.
19:57: He thinks he's been able to walk out into a life perhaps unencumbered, but he has suffered a terrible loss of love in his life and the potential for it.
20:08: He goes out into a dry and thirsty land or into a fetid swamp perhaps that offers the illusion of love but doesn't have it.
20:16: In church, there are ways we breach the dam and lose water here as well.
20:22: We judge one another, for example, and it's not so much that the judgments we make are wrong.
20:28: It's that they are pointless.
20:31: They accomplish nothing except the destruction of love.
20:36: The only way judging can bear fruit in our type of community is if we talk to one another.
20:44: If we talk to the person we are judgment judging, the judgment might someday bear fruit.
20:53: Otherwise, it's pointless.
20:55: All it does is create cracks in the dam.
20:59: Our brothers foibles are an opportunity to add water to the reservoir.
21:05: Muttering criticism to yourself puts cracks in the dam and wastes a golden opportunity.
21:13: Now, you may be expecting 1 Corinthians 13 to show up in a sermon like this, and I do not mean to disappoint you.
21:20: However, I want to slip around to the back door if I can.
21:26: And to take a little different look and I want you to follow me through this because I'm going to be changing it ever so slightly to emphasize something that I don't know if I've ever heard emphasized.
21:37: 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 1.
21:40: Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and am left without love, I have become a sounding brass or as a tinkling cymbal.
21:51: Now, the way this is usually preached is that we're supposed to speak with love.
21:56: We are supposed to somehow do something about the love within ourselves or speak in love and show love and be loving to people as opposed to merely speaking with the tongues of men and angels.
22:06: But he says this, if I do these things, if I stand before you and speak with the tongues of men and angels, and I'm a great orator and all that, and I go home.
22:18: Loveless Without love Not being the recipient of love.
22:24: I'm lost.
22:26: I'm like sounding brass.
22:28: I'm like a tinkling cymbal.

22:30: Though I have the gift of prophecy, I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and I have all faith, I can move mountains out here.
22:37: And I am left without love.
22:41: I am nothing.
22:43: Even if I go out and bestow all my goods to feed the poor and through my I give my body to be burned.
22:49: And I'm left without love.
22:52: It profits me nothing.
22:55: You know, I can't think of very many situations that would be worse.
22:59: Than to be a television personality.
23:03: To be a a a a great orator, a great speaker.
23:08: And when all is said and done to go backstage, meet no one, to get in a limousine and go home and sit down in my home my home alone without love, I can't think of a worse life.
23:21: Well, maybe the one Viktor Frankl had, but the thing about Viktor Frankl that I, that I would not have in that situation is he was not without love, and I think in truth, might even be better off.
23:35: Love is very patient and is kind.
23:37: I want to be the object of patience and kindness.
23:43: I want to be the object of love.
23:47: And, you know, being in a unique situation as one who stands before you and speaks, I know that that can't happen if I go, get finished with my sermons, the closing prayers and amen, I go out and get in my car and leave.
24:04: The way that I share love with the congregation is by staying here.
24:10: Interacting with you.
24:12: Of being there for you when grief strikes, this is the way I get it, and it is one of the things that comes to me.
24:19: Love doesn't envy.
24:20: Love doesn't vaunt itself.
24:22: Love is not puffed up, does not behave itself improperly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
24:41: Love never fails.
24:44: These are the kind of people I want to be around.
24:48: These are the kind of people I want for neighbors, churchmates, you know, people to sit around the table afterward to share coffee, to share food, to share fellowship, to share, share sorrow.
24:59: To share grief, to share pain, to share loss.
25:05: These are the kind of people with whom I would want to share my life.
25:10: There are people who don't envy one another, people who don't exalt themselves, people who are well behaved, people who will never ever let me down.
25:21: Whether they be prophecies, they'll fail.
25:24: Whether there are tongues, they'll cease.
25:27: Whether it be knowledge, it'll vanish away because we only know in part and we prophesy in part.

25:34: When that which is perfect has come, ha, all this stuff will just disappear.
25:40: When I was a child, I spoke as a child.
25:42: I understood as a child, I thought as a child.
25:45: When I became a man, I put away childish things.
25:49: You know, funny thing about that.
25:52: Children know how to love.
25:54: But not like they will.
25:57: Not like they will, they know affection.
26:00: They love to be held.
26:02: They love to be close.
26:03: They love the receiving of love, and they understand and know how to love at a child's level.
26:09: But they have no idea.
26:12: The demands that that love will make on them in years to come.
26:18: No idea.
26:20: Thankfully they will have parents who as time goes by, will have given them.
26:25: Enough love that they can carry it forward in the rest of their lives and begin to share it with other people to a different kind of love, he says.
26:33: Now we see through a glass darkly, then we will see face to face.
26:37: Now I know in part, then I will know even as I am known.
26:41: And now abides famous line, Faith, hope, and charity.
26:46: But the greatest of these is charity.
26:49: That is love.
26:51: Now why is this so?
26:53: Why is love greater than the other two?
26:58: I think it's because love can have the greater effect on our lives.
27:03: It can affect us so strongly.
27:07: One of the problems that I sense in not only in our tradition, but in other churches as well, love is not a doctrine that we can prove.
27:18: The Bible does say, prove all things, hold fast that which is good, but love is not a doctrine that we can prove like any, like, you know, by paging through the scriptures and by giving you lists of, of scriptures to read or making arguments about love.
27:32: That isn't the way it goes.
27:35: Love is something that we do.
27:36: It's a way of living our lives and interacting with one another in church, in family.
27:43: And love doesn't mean very much, frankly, if it is not manifested in family.
27:49: And in church.
27:51: Just last night, I was listening to a chorus from Handel's Messiah.
27:57: Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.
28:01: It's a gorgeous piece of music, and it, it, it carries with it an emphasis and a, an emotion that the words from Isaiah, I mean it's really not Isaiah, it's John, John the Baptist who said them, they did not convey.
28:19: But then there's this thing that Jesus said, it's in John 15:13, 1 verse.
28:25: Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

28:33: Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.
28:38: Greater love has no man than this, that a man laid down his life for his friends, and Jesus laid down his life in the hardest way.
28:46: The hardest way.
28:48: It didn't last as long as Viktor Frankel's ordeal, but it was worse.
28:53: And he laid his life down for the hardest people to love.
28:59: Because the truth is, even though we may be a little easier to love today than we might have been at one time in our lives, one of the reasons for that would have to be our experience of His love that has made it possible for us to love others.
29:15: He laid down his life for the unlovable as much as he laid it down for anyone, and for that I am particularly thankful.
29:23: He said, By this shall all men know that you are my disciples.
29:26: A little bit later.
29:28: By in, in, if you have love, one for one another.
29:33: Even when it's hard to love.
29:36: Even when you're being called upon to love the hardest people to love.
29:41: And candidly, some of us do fit that category, don't we?
29:46: It isn't all that easy.
29:48: Anyone can love his friends.
29:52: Anyone can love lovable people.
29:57: It's the ones that aren't so lovable.
30:00: That give us the challenge.
30:02: Anyone can love a puppy as long as you don't take him home and have him start wetting on things and chewing up your furniture.
30:08: Puppies are very lovable.
30:10: On the other hand, puppies can contribute to the love in a family.
30:15: But just before this verse I read, there is another one.
30:18: The very first verse just before.
30:22: This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.
30:31: Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
30:38: I've always read that with a certain I don't know what the word I'm looking for.
30:43: It's not foreboding, but it's tension, certainly.
30:46: The realization, first of all, he says, I, I expect you to love one another as I have loved you and I laid down my life for you.
30:58: And I look around myself and I ask myself, for whom am I willing to die?
31:05: For whom am I willing to die the hard way?
31:09: For whom am I willing to give up so much?
31:13: As Jesus did And yet he says, greater love has no man than this.
31:18: He lays down his life for his friends.
31:20: And you know, I've thought about it and I think one of the ways we have to do this, one of the ways we have to learn to do this, is we have to learn 5 minutes at a time.
31:33: You lay down a little bit of your time for your friends.
31:37: How long does it take you to pull a greeting card out of a drawer, a sympathy card out of a drawer?

31:44: How long does it take you, instead of merely signing the card, to take a little bit of time and to think about the person to whom you're writing and to write something personal to that person about their loss?
31:57: You learn to give yourself, as Christ gave Himself for us, maybe 5 minutes at a time.
32:05: And then having done that, maybe we can learn to manage 10, maybe we can learn to manage an hour, and maybe we can even learn to manage a day.
32:15: But you know, we have it to do.
32:18: We have it to do, pure and simply, we absolutely have it to do.
32:21: This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.
32:29: We love each other in the hard times.
32:32: We love each other in the hard ways.
32:36: We love each other even when we are hard to love.
32:42: Then day by day, in the family and in the church.
32:47: Week by week we pour water into the reservoir of love.
32:53: Because when the family and the church die, So does the world.