

1 Corinthians 13  
January 30, 2022

## Thinking About Love

On Christmas day (2021), the Webb space telescope was rocketed into space and has begun the set of procedures that will allow it to see deeper into the darkness than any previous telescope. As I understand, it orbits (kind of) the earth about one million miles away, five or so times further away than the Moon. Sometime this summer, with its complex and fascinating technology, it should begin to send back images.

In a different vein, we are not far away from Academy Award season when the movie making industry will celebrate itself by giving trophies to those it thinks have made the best movies. They actually began voting on nominations this past week and will conclude on Tuesday. Right now all one can do is guess. Movies such as Belfast, The Power of the Dog, No Time to Die, and Don't Look Up are on the list of might be nominated movies.

And, of course, today is the day we learn what teams will play in this year's Super Bowl. And the Winter Olympics begin on Friday evening in China. Our once-every-four-year affair with winter sports; Figure Skating, Downhill Skiing, Halfpipe, Speed Skating and Curling will come and go in the next two weeks or so, before we go back to our norm of really not paying all that much attention to them.

All the time I was growing up there was "Cold War" tension between The United States and Russia that was often at the heart of political debate, both within our country and around the world, among the other members of the international community. Recently tensions have begun to increase again over the situation in Ukraine. And there is the on going Covid struggle with all the arguments going back and forth.

We don't have the luxury of being tired of anything we cannot control. Like it or not, we face the world as it is with its issues and happenings, and people as they are in their vast array, as well as whatever is happening in our personal lives.

Here on this day, we are offered one of the bible's "stop-in-your-tracks, cease-all-other-activity, think-about-this," texts, that demands our attention and will not let us go on as if nothing has happened, as if we have not heard. It is, of course, the grand chapter about Love in the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.

We are given a sentence one will never hear from the astronomers, the mathematicians, and the engineers, and only as an inference from the artists and athletes we like so much, whose efforts are always at best only mixtures of selfish and altruistic motives, and not much from the diplomats either.

"And these three remain: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love."

There are only three really important things that define humanity, if we are concerned at all with what it means to be a human being in the best sense of the word. After everything else is said and done, only three things that can stand up to any meaningful examination; faith, hope, and love, and we are told the most important is *love*.

Given everything else that concerns us, what are we to make of this sentence? How are we to take it? What are we to do? From the start we understand that the English word, “love,” is deficient, unable to carry the freight, so Paul has given all kinds of other words to help us out.

The first thing that Paul tells us is that whatever we do, whatever gifts we have, or talents, or abilities, if there is no love, no concern for others, for the greater good, then they are worthless. Keep that in mind.

The second thing Paul does is make a list for us other words that do not explain anything completely, but taken together get us closer; patient, kind, protecting, trusting, hoping, persevering, rejoicing with the good. And there are negatives; not envious, not boasting, not proud, not rude, not self-seeking or easily angered, keeps no grudges. Doesn't delight in evil.

Afterwards, Paul goes on to speak of our limitations. We see and know in part, like a child, through a glass darkly. We are in no position to judge anyone. And all these gifts are temporary anyhow, they are from a context that is going away. He looks forward to when

perfection comes. All of this is more than enough to think about, and requires more than just thought.

When we come to this day of emphasis upon Divine Love, it is incumbent upon us to celebrate the majesty of this concept, one which we could apprehend no other way than to be told. But our celebration should be tinged with humility and confession, because surely we have not achieved the ideal, but have fallen short.

And let humility and confession turn into the dedication to nurture this love in our lives, and seek it in our actions, never becoming discouraged at our failures nor arrogant at our successes, nor complacent, but mindful of God's Grace and of the promise that has been made to us; that as a part of the salvation given to us, we will indeed come to love in the way described, not in this life, in which we can only move towards it, but in the age to come. *Moving towards it, that is what we seek to do.*

As far as the science and the arts and all the human endeavors? They are to be done in love, or not at all. Which means done with a concern for the people that will be affected by them. Love sees into a different kind of darkness, not physical, like interstellar space, but spiritual, like in the human heart where sometimes is found he willingness to do harm to one another, or disregard the well-being of a neighbor; and what seems to be the darkness of our blindness about the divine, that a some of our guides had said is the result of a blinding light too bright to see. It is love that brings us into the light, to the glory of God. Amen.

[Back](#)[Home](#)