

Either Way, Love Flows

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one in whom we trust, Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Today's sermon will be rather short so we can have enough time to hear everything our guest, Julie Barhorst has to share with us as the representative from Oesterlen. It's actually very fitting to have her with us today as we consider where and how to fill in the gap in our ministry left when Wernle closed a few months ago. Julie shared quite a lot of information in our Christian Conversations time earlier. One of the reasons I love Trinity so much is your heart for loving and helping our neighbors both near and far. We're a small(ish) congregation, but we have arms that reach out far and wide in love.

The author of First John has a lot to say about love. In First John the author identifies at least two sources or directions of how love flows. First we told our love for our neighbor stems from God first loving us. So, we love only because we are loved by God. In today's reading the emphasis changes a bit. The second way our love for each other and our neighbor is possible is because we know and love God. John says if we know God, we'll then love our neighbors. Today we discover that if we love God we'll keep the Commandments and love all of God's children. Our love for others flows from our love for God.

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I may be oversimplifying this by quite a bit and it's all quite confusing. Do we love others because God first loved us or do we love others because of our love for God? In the first case love flows from God through us to our neighbors in need and in the second love for our neighbors is sort of a byproduct of our love for God. I might be splitting hairs on this, but it does seem like two different things.

The more I pondered this dilemma the more I began to realize either way, love flows and that's what matters. Verses 4 and 5 remind us, “⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” It reminded me of the saying of Jesus on the night when he was betrayed when he told his disciples to not let their hearts be troubled. He went on to explain that in this world we all would face trouble, but to take heart because He has overcome the world. It really doesn't matter if our love for our neighbor is inspired by God first loving us or if we come to love God and then learn to love our neighbor. What is important is knowing God's Son, our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ. It's Faith in Jesus, the one who has already overcome the world, that enables us to know God, to know God's love, and to love our neighbors as Jesus did. It was your faith in Jesus Christ and the love of God that first motivated this congregation, many years ago, to work so tirelessly for the children of Wernle.

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Now, it's that same faith and love driving us to find another way to serve God by serving God's Children.

May the love of God fill your hearts to overflowing. May the abundance of love you have find an outlet where each and every one of us can be a blessing to our neighbors. Now, let's discover how we can share our love with our neighbors at Oesterlen. Mrs. Julie Barhorst, thank you for sharing your time and helping us find another way we can reflect God's love to our neighbors at Osterlen.