

To say that we live in a chaotic world seems to be an understatement. We live in a world where truth is no longer the norm; we are inundated with what is commonly referred to as artificial information. It is hard today to live without a cell phone or computer because everything from shopping to managing our time or to managing our money seems to depend on a computerized object. We spend more time looking at a screen for information than turning the pages of our bibles to gain the knowledge that will lead us on our intended or planned journey according to the will of God. The greatest message or conversation we will ever have is the message we send, or the conversation we have, as we kneel in prayer with our Lord.

As we listen to those who try to prove that our bibles are full of discrepancies or those who try to prove that there is no God it is hard to stay calm but stay calm we must. Even in the Apostle Paul's time the believers were faced with the same type of challenges that we face today. There were those whose doctrine was different, there were those who believed in Gods of their own making, deities made of clay and stone. Today there are many who have made money or material items their God believing that security is gained by the amount of wealth they have obtained.

We the confessing Christians that have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour know and trust that our security was secured on a hill called Golgotha where redemption became a reality for all who trust and obey. Today we are here in this place where the outside world is distant just for a little while as we worship, and for just a short time we can feel the communion between God and man. As you listen to that small still voice be assured that you are not alone for the Holy Spirit tells us we are alive because Christ lives in us and we in Him.

In reading these two scriptures I started to think more and more about verse 7 which says "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." I ask you, What then can we do with what we have received? I believe, above all other things we have been the recipients of a great love the love of God that must be shared for it will be a fruitless gift if it is not used. Have you ever wondered what the love of God looks like when it is shared?

In 2008 I was involved with Seattle Mennonite Church, working with the homeless at a drop in centre called God's li'l Acre teaching them how to build garden sheds that they could sell to the faith community and thereby giving them purpose and a chance to be off the streets. Even though I had years of experience with the homeless here at home this would be a life changing experience. As I walked the filthy streets of Seattle where in almost every doorway or alcove those that had been discarded by society were huddled together holding onto life; I learned that the actions of a compassionate heart was of more consequence than words. From a

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compassionate heart the language spoken silently is love for there are no words that can penetrate the broken heart like a gentle touch or a friendly face; this is love at its loudest, this is loving with confidence in a chaotic world.

The apostle Paul tells us that we must preach the word and to be ready in season and out of season but how do we preach the word. How do we love God? Our actions tell the story, our actions define us as Christians, our actions are the words unspoken but felt and heard by the needful, broken heart. As the climate changes from season to season our actions must be as changeless as the love that comes from God for each of us.

It is true that as Christians our words or what we believe are not always accepted by those whose agenda is different from ours and this according to Paul causes division among us and the secular world. Paul tells us we must remove ourselves from those situations for their ears are deaf to sound doctrine and they choose to live according to their own desires.

When we love someone dearly, that is to say, someone that we would not hurt for any reason, we certainly would do all not dishonour that person. When we get caught up in disputes over false teachings with those who will not listen to the truth according to God's holy word; we in fact dishonour God. We do not consciously set out to dishonour God but we are exhorted to love our brothers and sisters unconditionally and arguing will only cause division and strife making it even harder for them to know the God we serve. When we get caught up in arguments trying to prove we are right it will often make us seem proud or arrogant to the unbeliever. It is when we allow our pride to rule us in these cases we dishonour God for only He can change the errant heart and we must allow Him to work through our love for others by our unconditional selfless love. Confrontations do not bring about reconciliation!

The apostle Paul tells us that we must evangelize and fulfil our ministry; but how should we evangelize and what is our ministry? We may not be a Wesley, Knox, Spurgeon or Martin Luther; we may not be gifted with great words to preach but we are gifted with the love of Christ that can be shared without the gift of words. There are many stories of Christians who changed the world with their gift of Love; I believe Corrie Ten Boom's story is one that epitomizes that love. Corrie's story starts by loving her neighbour even though they were of a different belief and adhered to a different doctrine being Jewish in a world that persecuted them. As told in the movie *The Hiding Place* she and her family would be arrested and sent to several concentration camps run by the Nazis. Existence could not begin to describe the torture and deprivation she would face in the infamous camp named Ravensbruck. Hungry and cold and tortured by lice all she had was a small bible that she had smuggled into the camp to give her the strength to trust in her God who had been faithful in the past and she believed would be faithful in the future.

Corrie used that little bible to hold bible class late at night after lights out, as she read God's word to those who wanted to hear the story of Christ's love. Her readings of God's word would offer hope in a place where death and disease were the norm. It was her love for her Saviour Jesus Christ and her faith in a changeless God that allowed her to believe that one day she would be free from this place. Corrie loved with confidence in a chaotic world. Each of us here today can have that confidence to love in a chaotic world if we trust in the word of God.

Some years after being released Corrie tells the story of coming face to face with one of the tormentor guards at the camp and again she teaches us the importance of being forgiving or loving in a chaotic world. Corrie did not let bitterness into her heart for her heart was the place where her Lord was in residence. A love like the love that Corrie would take around the world as she spoke to gatherings of people who wanted to hear her story also taught others how to love in a chaotic world.

Maybe you are saying to yourself, but I have not had that kind of experience, or maybe you're in doubt about speaking like Corrie did. I have been preaching for a number of years and can tell you that each time I stand behind the pulpit my stomach still does back flips like some world class gymnast. Corrie trusted and had faith that God was leading her and it is that same faith that gives me the strength to do what is required, it is that same faith that you can count on when you are called to be his agent here on earth.

In the gospel of Luke 3: 22 we read "and a voice came from heaven which said, You are my beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." We also are the beloved of God the Father and it is our responsibility to show others how that affects our lives.

- Henri Nouwen one of this century's great spiritual leaders who was not bordered by denominational differences writes of a experience that clarifies for us what it means to be the beloved of God as he describes an event at ,L'e Arche Daybreak a home for the challenged where he was a priest. He writes "Shortly before I started a prayer service, Janet a member of our community said to me, Henri can you give me a blessing. I responded in a somewhat automatic way by tracing the sign of the cross on her forehead. No that doesn't work, she said, I want a real blessing. After the service, when about 30 people were sitting on the floor, I said, Janet has asked me for a special blessing. She feels she needs it now. Janet stood up and walked toward me. I stood up and opened my arms to welcome Janet as she walked up and laid her head on my chest. Putting my hands on her shoulders, the sleeves of my robe enveloped her. I looked at her and said, Janet, I want you to know that you are God's beloved daughter. You are precious in God's eyes. Your beautiful smile, your kindness to others and the people in your house, and all

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the good things you do show us what a beautiful human being you are. I know you feel a little low these days and that there is some sadness in your heart, but I want you to remember who you are; a very special person, deeply loved by God, and the people here with you.

When we bless those who are in need we are giving them a glimpse into what it means to be loved. However we must not give our blessings without being true to the love that was first shown to us by Jesus. We must not allow our time restraints to diminish the importance of showing others that they too are the beloved of God. To fulfil our ministry we must treat each person as the beloved of God.

Just as Henri's robe enveloped Janet, so do the arms of Jesus envelop us in love, as we love with confidence in a chaotic world. A simple hug in the name of Christ's love can make you a Luther, Knox, Wesley or Spurgeon for you will change the world through love. Evangelism starts with a smile and a kind word when it is spoken from a heart that has the love of Christ at its centre. If we each do one small thing, then together with God's help we will accomplish a great thing. Trust in His promises and let the word of truth be your guide in all things.

Our faith is based on trust, we trust that in all things uttered in prayer our God is faithful and just, and will not forsake us. The song writer wrote; "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus then to trust and obey". Put your trust in His word and spread the happiness that you share with Him with others today. Know His peace, embrace His wisdom and feel His presence in your life today and every day as you love with confidence in a chaotic world, for you are the beloved of God. Amen

Prayer

Lord teach us to love one another, open our hearts to let others in, grant us the courage to give hugs where words will not do, let us be your servants according to your will. Lord allow your presence in our lives be a visible sight to those we encounter day to day. In your name O, Lord, we pray. Amen