

Pastor: Love is that kind of acceptance and forgiveness. Love is Jesus with a cup and a loaf, a towel in the basin stretched all across. I love you this much. Love is caring and caring deeply. Love is caring for those who are addicted to alcohol and other drugs. Love is caring enough to become involved in a redemptive relationship with the one who is addicted and is caring enough to become involved in movements and agencies that seek to minister for the total person imprisoned in such addiction. Love is caring for the lonely, caring enough to be a friend. Love is caring for those who live in our society in conditions that are too miserable and too filthy for any human beings to live in. Love is caring enough to become involved and providing adequate housing and adequate care for all of God's children. Love is caring for the hungry, caring enough to feed them. And in the streets of Durham, and along the streets of every North Carolina city and crossroads, there are hungry people. And if we love, we'll care enough to identify them and seek to meet the need. Love is listening. Love is the son or the daughter who listens to the parent because they love the parent and the parent is worth listening to. Love is the parent who listens to the son or daughter because they're persons of valued worth and deserve to be listened to. Love is dealing with injustice. We live in a society where there is still racism and injustice. Love is caring enough to deal with the traditions, to deal openly and actively with the conditions, the prejudices, the agencies, the institutions that continue to foster injustice and racism. Love cares and cares deeply. In his book, *Works of Love*, Soren Kierkegaard commenting on Paul's words, love is patient. Writes, love is patient means love waits. And love does wait. Love waits for the slow learner. Love waits for the one who has a handicapping condition and just cannot quite keep up. Love waits for those who are growing older and whose bodies just won't perform quite as quickly as once they did. Love waits, love never rushes on and leaves one of God's children struggling to keep up. Love waits because love cares and cares deeply. Love never treats a person as a thing but as one of worth and valiantly. A person treats persons as persons of worth and value and dignity. There's a delightful story of the little boy who went into a restaurant with his mother and sister. Their waiter came to get the orders and took the order first of the sister, and then of the mother and then turned to the little boy, the young man and said now young man what will you have? And before he could speak up his sister said he wants a hamburger but she ignored the sister and said, young man what did you want? And he said, I want a hamburger. Well what do you want on it and the mother said right away, he wants everything on it but the waiter ignored the mother and said, young man what do you want on it? He said, I want everything on it. As the waiter left, the boy looked at his mother and said, mom, she thinks I'm a person. Love always relates to others whether they be young or old as persons of worth and value, worth living with, worth sharing life with, worth listening to, worth being in communion and communication with. And apart from this, there's no hope for life is there? There's no hope for family life, unless husbands and wives listen to one another, are present to one another because they love, are caring enough to be sensitive to all that is said verbally and what is said non-verbally. There's no hope for world peace and world relationships unless leaders of the world can sit down around the conference tables believing that those across the table are of worth and value, worth living with on this planet, worth caring about, worth saving. There is no hope in interpersonal relationships unless they're characterized by caring, listening, communicating love. Love never despairs. In the sixth chapter of Luke's gospel, we find these words of Jesus, love your enemies. Then there's a footnote.

If you look down at the footnote it says this, other ancient authorities have at this point, despairing of no man. Their ancient authorities which put Jesus as saying, love your enemies, despairing of no man. And whether or not those ancient authorities are accurate although some go back to the second century. Whether or not they act but they sure do describe, with accuracy, the life and relationships of Jesus. He never despaired of anyone. Others may have despaired of Judas but not Jesus. Others may have despaired of one like Simon Peter big and blundering and denying but not Jesus. Others may have given up on Zacchaeus but not Jesus. Love doesn't give up. How easy it is to give up. There are some people who just don't respond. We offer love, gestures of love, words of love and they don't respond. In fact, they resist us and reject us and maybe even at times curse us in return but love never despairs. Love never gives up because love is of God and God never gives up on any one of his children. And love is always seeking to enlarge the circle. So long as the person who loves is aware of anyone that needs love out there and is not being loved. Love cannot be satisfied. Edwin Markham wrote a little four line thing. He drew a circle that shut me out. Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win. We drew a circle that took him in. Love is always enlarging the circle of outreach. To take in every person that needs that touch of love. But what does this say to the church? It speaks to us as individual Christians but it speaks to the church for it says, the church of the churches and mission is the community of love. Love is the message, love is the motivation, love is the mission of the church. David Livingstone is one of the great heroes of our Christian tradition. He gave himself, literally spent himself in loving ministry on the continent of Africa. But his body was so broken by sickness, that he could not walk. He had people make a stretcher and literally carry him bodily only into the continent to do more work. There was always one more river he needed to cross because there was one more village in which he needed to go to touch people with the love of Christ. Always one more village, one more village to which he felt called to go that he might touch people with a touch of Christ love. He died on the continent, was brought back to eventually to Westminster Abbey where he lies buried. On his gravestone, are these words along one side of the gravestone are these words, other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they must hear my voice, the words of Jesus that motivated him and compelled him to keep going in ministry of love. Along the other side of that gravestone in the center aisle of Westminster Abbey are these words, may heaven's rich blessing come upon all who will help to heal the open sore of the world. And all over this world, there are open sores. On the new campus in the city of Durham, in the city of Raleigh, all over the state, all over this world, they're hurting people. There are souls that need the healing touch of Christ, they're the lonely who're crying out, touch me someone with friendship and love, they're the hungry who're crying out, touch me with healing, I need food. There're those who've lost the way in life who're crying out, somebody show me the right way, touch me with healing love. They don't always say this by their words but the very condition in which we see them is itself this kind of cry. All over the world they're hurting, lonely, seeking people, who will not find the way, who will not find the healing they need unless you and I, as disciples of Jesus Christ, touch them with his kind of love. On the night before he was crucified, Jesus said, this is my body, this is my blood. On that same night, he washed the disciples feet. On the next morning, he stretched himself out on a cross for you and for me and through all of those actions he was saying, I love you this much. And here today he is saying to us, by this they will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another, love one another as I have loved you. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, if I deliver my body to be burned but

have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful, it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful, it is not rejoicing wrong. Or when bad things happen to others it rejoices only in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and do is all things. Love never ends. God help us to make love our aim. Amen. (organ playing)

Male: As we remain standing, let us unite in this historical confession of the Christian faith. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. The third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and sit at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, amen. The Lord be with you. (audience responding) Let us pray. Almighty and ever living God, whose will is always to do good for them whom you love, and as we have so eloquently heard, your love includes all of us. This is a particularly important Sunday to us in the regular, secular makeup of the year when memories become tender, and the emotions rise near the surface and the instinct to say a word of gratitude to people who brought you life and gave you life and nurtured you in life. Let we pray the upon the families of this land and of all of the lands. Let the dignity and the peace and the integrity of the family may be restored where it is broken and we be surrounded with goodness where it is lacking. For the gift of those who gave us life, we give thee a Thanksgiving. And for the gift of him who gave us eternal life, we give thee the commitment of our own souls. How good it is to be here. We pray for your children all over this earth. For the disturbed lands and 20th century history. For those who cry out for peace and there is no peace. Somewhere, out of the miracle of your love save us from the stupid devastation that we inflict upon ourselves and each other. We have come this day to celebrate your aliveness and to celebrate your resurrection and to affirm it in our own lives. Hear our prayer and accept it. We pray through Jesus Christ, Amen. Let us worship God now with the giving of our tithes and our offerings. (bell-based music) (organ playing) We made bold to bring thee our gifts dear Christ. We bring them to you because of what you have brought to us. All of life is your gift to us. Accept these gifts we pray and hear us as we pray together the prayer which you did teach us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen. (organ playing) If you would hesitate in your pews for a moment following the benediction, the three of us would like to greet you at the rear of the chapel on this unusual day. And now may the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the love of God, the Father, and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with us all now and forevermore, amen. (upbeat music) (people shuffling)