

Date: September 21, 2025 (Pentecost 15; ALONGSIDE HOPE)

1. Texts: Jeremiah 8:18-9:1; Ps. 79:1-9; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13.
2. Subject: discipleship.
3. Topic: love in word and deed.
4. Aim: guide.
5. Proposition: "The genuine disciple sacrificially loves others in both word and deed."

PRACTICAL LOVE

September 21 has been marked as a day to reflect on hope which we can bring through Alongside Hope. "What's that?" you ask.

Alongside Hope used to be the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, a fund set up after the Springhill Mine disaster in 1958 to help the families of the victims. Over the years, it grew and focussed its attention on development outside of Canada. PWRDF, as it was known then, joined organizations like Lutheran World Relief and Catholic Relief Services. Becoming "Alongside Hope" last year did not change its focus on disaster relief and local development with a particular emphasis on vulnerable people around the world. Alongside Hope seeks to bring tangible and meaningful signs of hope to people who experience little hope.

But here's the thing: most of the time most Anglicans view organizations like Alongside Hope as charities. And almost all charities receive the leftovers after our food, housing and living expenses are paid for. Charities are treated like options for our spending. It's nice to support charities, and we all feel better when we do support them, but donating to a charity is an extra. When times are tough, like they are now, these extras may fall away.

But let's think about Alongside Hope, other charities and even the Church differently.

Jesus said,

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your

neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."¹

He also said,

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.²

Love is the foundation and core of the Christian gospel.

Of course, Jesus was not talking about the sentimental attachment one person has for another. He certainly was not talking about romantic love. He was talking about his quality of love, a love that he proved in his crucifixion.

Love, you see, is the choice—the decision—to put the life of the beloved above your own. We choose to put the needs and hopes of the beloved ahead of our own. We decide that the life of the beloved is worth our sacrifice.

Sure, usually they are little sacrifices like choosing to make supper or going to an event that you really don't want to attend. It doesn't really cost much to visit that in-law that you don't appreciate or to take the whole family to the Stampede.

Sometimes, the sacrifice is more demanding, like sticking through thick and thin with a partner who is depressed or who is disabled. Or maybe, one lover has to give up his career for the sake of the other. Once in a while, one may have to die for another, as Jesus did for us. This, by the way, is what he meant when he said, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

Love is the choice to put the life and well-being of the beloved ahead of your own.

¹ Matthew 22:37-40.

² John 13:34.

This necessarily means that love is always to be made tangible and practical. Love is not love if it is in words alone. Love must be seen. It must be felt. It must be experienced in both words and deeds.

It is clear that, throughout the Bible, such love is to be shared with the poor and needy, with the oppressed and the downtrodden, with the widow and the orphan. We are to give preferential treatment to those in need. Again, Jesus said, Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ...'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'³

It is out of love that we are to help others, a love illustrated by Jesus and placed upon our hearts.

Now the work of Alongside Hope takes on a different light. Its programs are not just being nice to others. They are part of the gospel. We prove ourselves to be genuine disciples of Jesus when we support Alongside Hope—and, indeed, the Church itself. We are the inheritors of the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. We are those beloved by God himself, and we share that love with those in greatest need of it.

Alongside Hope is no charity. The Church is no charity. They are tools God gives us so that we might demonstrate his love in word and deed. All we have to do is learn how to use them.

AMEN.

³ Matthew 25:34-36, 40.