

REJOICING IN THE TRUTH

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Rev. John Park

I'm sure many of us know this story; in 2 Samuel 12, the prophet Nathan came to King David and shared a story of a rich man who had many flocks but took a poor man's only lamb. Then "David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity'" (2 Samuel 12:5-6). Immediately upon this, Nathan revealed that this man is David himself, and God would bring a curse and severe consequence to him and his family.

Paul says, "[Love] does not rejoice in wrongdoing" (1 Corinthians 13:6a). I believe the emotion King David had describes this verse very well. The Lord was not pleased with David's wrongdoings, specifically coveting Uriah's wife, sleeping with her, lying and deceiving Uriah and driving him to a death in battle in order to steal his wife. When you see the news of innocent people and children are suffering and murdered, there is something inside you quivering with rage. I'm sure God feels the same way you feel. God does not rejoice in wrongdoing, and his love inside us does not rejoice in wrongdoing. Proverbs 6:16-19 says, "There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family." Not only the Lord does not rejoice in wrongdoing; he hates wrongdoing.

The word "wrongdoing" in Greek is *adikia*, which is the noun form of the word *adikos*, and the word *adikos* comes from the word *dike*, which means "judgment" or "punishment." So, *adikia* literally means "no judgment" or "no punishment." So, when we say, "Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing," it doesn't simply mean love does not rejoice in the things that are wrong; it's more accurate to say that love does not rejoice when there is no judgment and justice on the things done wrong. It's interesting to see that whenever Jesus mentions the last day, he never says, "I will forgive your iniquities"; rather, he often says, "[I] will repay everyone for what has been done" (Matthew 16:27, c.f. Job 34:11, Pslam 62:12, Proverbs 24:12, Isaiah 3:10-11, Jeremiah 32:19, Ezekiel 18:30, Matthew 6:4, Luke 14:14, Luke 18:7, Romans 2:6, Revelation 2:23, 6:10, 22:12). Some may say, "How can a loving God judge us?" But, our loving God must be fair and just, and true love cannot rejoice in wrongdoing.

Of course, such a love is a tough love. It creates tension and pressure; it demands a changed heart and behaviours and repentance; it expects perseverance and sacrifice. I came across an article in our Canadian Presbyterian History Newsletter dated Spring 2014, titled, "Faith under Fire." I would like to read a couple of excerpts from it.

In the midst of the horrors and carnage of war, religious-minded Presbyterians served with distinction and frequently turned to their Christian faith to strengthen and sustain them. One of those was Hugh Boulter. He enlisted in Port Arthur Ontario in March 1915, and served with the 52nd Battalion. He led his section "over the top" during the battle of the Somme and also during

the fighting for Passchendaele. Having been in the trenches for eighteen months, and despite his longing for home, his faith was sustaining his morale. As he wrote in a letter to his sister: *I was feeling a bit down in the lip, I had visions of home sweet home, I could see your face, sister, and all the others were quite plain before me...I worked on digging a place to get cover from rifle and machine gun fire. I don't trust a hole in the ground to keep me from danger. There is One higher than me who knows and I will trust in Him...I am not afraid to die Cora for I have offered my life more times than I have fingers and toes since I came over to France.*

Hugh Boulter never saw his beloved home again. He died of wounds just before the end of the war.

The article also highlights the work of the military chaplains in the war, called "Padres." The article recorded the statement of one of the Padres, E. H. Oliver who would become principal of Presbyterian College, Saskatoon: "I want to escape the utter destruction of the soul that overwhelms me when I think of Ypres and Passchendaele, the hell of Lens...The sheer havoc and appalling desolation of it all haunts me. Redemption through a cross, life through death...We are learning today what sacrifice means, for the human race is marching to its Calvary." It seems that these men and women learned what tough love meant. That judgment and penalty we ought to receive has been taken away by our Lord, who died on the cross for us. The Love that does not rejoice in wrongdoing has come down in flesh and laid His own life to pay the price and set us free. This Love did not simply dwell in the state of not rejoicing, hating and being frustrated with wrongdoing; but, this Love had taken an action to resolve the problem of sin and death and offer a way of salvation to you and me. That's the Good news you and I have received and that's the ultimate truth that sets you and me free from the bondage of injustice, sin and death.

Paul then says "[love] rejoices in the truth." I would like to highlight a couple of interesting points here. First, I would like to draw everyone's attention to the word "truth." Its Greek word is *aletheia*, which is derived from the word *lanthano*. *Lanthano* means "hidden" or "unaware," and hence *aletheia* actually means "unveiling" or "disclosure." This aligns well with the concept of the Gospel in the Bible. Salvation through his Son our Lord Jesus Christ is something God has prepared from the beginning of time and has now revealed to us (c.f. 1 Peter 1:20). This Good news has been unveiled, disclosed to all who have hearts open to receive. Jesus says, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).

Second, there are two different words for "rejoice" in this verse. When it says, "[love] does not rejoice in wrongdoing," its Greek word is *chairō*. This is used when one experiences joyous emotion from an event. This is singular rejoicing. On the other hand, when it says, "[love] does not rejoice in the turh," it uses *sygchairō*, which is a combined word, meaning, "rejoice with" or "celebrate with." This word is used when you share your joyous emotion with other people around you. For instance, in Luke 1, verse 14 says, "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice [chariot] at his birth" (This is an angel's announcement about John's birth). The people will feel joyous when they hear this good news; this is simply the expression of the people's feelings. But, later in the same chapter, verse 58 says, when the boy was born, "Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with [sygchairō] her." Here, this is not simply describing the people's emotion at the news; this is also the description of the cooperative celebration the

community experienced together. Likewise, love doesn't simply rejoice in the truth; it arouses joyous and celebratory experience when the truth is told and shared. I don't know how many of us are old enough to recollect what it was like on VE day, but I found an article in the Globe and Mail on May 8, 1945, titled, "Carnival of joy loosed as Toronto celebrates European Victory."

Laughter and tears, a medley of noises welling up to a blue sky, ticker tape glinting earthward from office buildings, the blare of horns, the roar of planes overhead, flags and bunting fluttering in the spring breeze, open church doors and prayers- this was Toronto's response yesterday to the end of the European war. To those whose minds travelled backwards, to the end of another war nearly 27 years ago, the silencing of the guns in Europe this time brought release from bondage of the spirit. And to those whose span of years fall between two wars, the day of days meant noise and more noise, snake dances, the waving of flags, the complete surrender to boisterous celebration. Toronto let loose a tidal wave of enthusiasm that drowned out the Government's expressed desire to have VE-Day observed the day following the announcement of the unconditional surrender of Germany. Stores and office buildings closed down and the staffs rushed outside to merge with the singing, shouting crowds that marched down the middle of the business thoroughfares; heedless of the few automobiles and street cars that ventured their way.

The joy that the people had and shared with others on VE day is like the joy that love celebrates with the truth. It's contagious and it overflows. God's truth creates and arouses joy in an individual's life and the life of community. May God bless everyone today, as we remember the joy of salvation and His protection. Amen.