

Series: Healthy Rhythms for a Fruitful Life

Title: The Rhythm of Loving One Another

Passage: Hebrews 13:1-16

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January 25, 2026

Introduction:

- We've been looking at healthy rhythms for a fruitful Christian life.
 - And we began by seeing how there's great gain, in seeking godliness in our lives.
 - Then we saw how our strength for ministry, comes from putting our confidence in what Christ has done for us, and not in our achievements and results.
 - Then last week, we learned how we can serve one another by stirring and encouraging.
 - And we saw how we can do this, by setting a good example, by inviting others to serve, by serving our children, and by faithfully gathering together.
- This morning, as we come to the last sermon in this series, I want you to see, the importance of cultivating love in the Christian life.
 - Without love, we can't bear good fruit.
 - The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13, that if we don't have love, we're nothing.
 - In Galatians 5:6 the Bible says:
 - The only thing that counts is faith working through love.
 - And so, we need to consider how we can practice love, and grow in love.



- When you read the news today, you'll see that our world is very angry, and hostile, and divided.
 - And when change is slow, our natural response will be to fight anger, with anger.
 - To fight hostility, with hostility.
- But we need to remember that Jesus calls us to be different.
 - Jesus says in John 13:
 - **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”** John 13:34-35
 - Jesus makes it clear, that it's not more anger, or hostility, or a divisive spirit, or a louder voice, that's going to lead more people to peace, and more people to faith in Christ.
 - Rather, it's through our love, the world will see that we are his disciples.
 - It's through our love that all people will know, the love of Christ.
- And what we'll see today, is how we can show the love of Christ to an angry world.
 - You may find it difficult to love those who disagree with you.
 - You may find it hard to love those who are hurtful and self-righteous.
 - But the good news is that we can grow in love.
 - And through this passage, Jesus shows us, how we can love others, as he loved us.
 - Through this passage, Jesus shows us, how we can show his love, to those who need his love.

Point 1:

- First, we can show the love of Christ, by persevering in love.
 - Verse 1 states:
 - **“Let brotherly love continue.”** Hebrews 13:1
- I want you to notice how verse 1 speaks about BROTHERLY love.
 - Instead of just saying, continue in love, the Bible speaks about continuing in BROTHERLY love.
 - In other words, we’re commanded to love others as members of one family.
 - To love others, as our brothers and our sisters.
 - Why?
 - Because we actually are, one family, adopted through Jesus Christ.
- The church isn’t a social club.
 - It’s not a Christian park district.
 - It’s not a political think tank.
 - Or a jury that judges others.
 - At the core, the church is a spiritual family, brought together, not by human blood, but united, by the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - That means, the people next to you, even though you may not know them well, they’re your brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Christ has made us one.
- In Hebrews chapter 2, we’re reminded that Jesus is our brother, who’s not ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters.



- Jesus is our brother, who shows us the way to the Father.
- Jesus is our brother, who gave his life, so we could be saved.
- And so, as Jesus loves us, let's love one another, as brothers and sisters.
- And we need to remember that love needs to be the foundation of everything we do.
 - Last week, we were reminded how we need to serve one another.
 - But if our serving, isn't grounded in love, the Bible reminds us that it means nothing.
 - Listen to 1 Corinthians 13:
 - **“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And 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, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”** 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
 - As we serve and volunteer, on the welcoming team, in children's ministry, in worship, in LIFE groups, in hospitality, in every ministry in the church, let's remember to love one another, as brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Because apart from love, we gain nothing.
- We're also commanded to continue in love.
 - That means, we're commanded to commit ourselves to one another.
 - To persevere in loving one another, even when it's hard.



- To keep loving each other, and not giving up.
- There will be times when there's conflict in the church, when there's misunderstanding, when there are struggles to overcome.
 - But to continue in love, means that we show patience, and forgiveness, and continue to encourage, and continue to fight side by side for the advance of the gospel.
 - It's when you struggle together, when you overcome conflict together, when you strive through difficult times to honor Christ, you'll see how God will grow your love.
- The Vernon Hills campus opened in August of 2020, and since that time, we've been through many ups and downs.
 - We've faced challenging seasons, and seasons of amazing growth.
 - And I can truly say that through it all, I've seen that our love for one another has continued to grow.
 - I've been humbled at the way many of you have loved each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - I've seen people forgive one another.
 - I've seen people welcome others with open arms.
 - I've seen people encouraging those who were going through tough times.
 - And Jesus is telling us today, to continue in brotherly love.
 - To continue, striving together as brothers and sisters in Christ, for the advance of the gospel.
- As you look at the world today, you may feel discouraged by all the violence and division.
 - And you may wonder, what difference you could possibly make.



- But let's not forget Jesus' promise.
 - He said:
 - **“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**
 - When we love one another as brothers and sisters, when we forgive instead of retaliate, when we stay instead of walking away, when we bear with one another in patience and grace, that's how we can make a difference in our culture.
 - Because that's what brotherly love does.
 - It shines light in broken places.
 - It shows the world what it looks like to treat one another as people made in the image of God.
- We can show the love by Christ, by persevering in love.

Point 2:

- Second, we can show the love of Christ, by inviting the stranger.
 - **“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”**
Hebrews 13:2
- In ancient times, there weren't hotels and Airbnbs that people could rent.
 - In fact, there were a limited number of safe places that people could stay, when leaving their home.
 - In a Jewish area, a person might find a safe place to stay.
 - But in the Roman world, inns were at times, associated with danger and even with prostitution.
 - So, travelers had to rely on the hospitality of someone in the town.



- They had to wait for someone to invite them in.
- And it was the responsibility of the host to give them food, and a place to sleep.
- And this was an important ministry, where believers could show the love of God to strangers.
- To people outside their community.
- Now, the application for this verse isn't, that we all need to open an Airbnb.
 - But for us today, one way we can invite strangers, and show the love of Christ is by inviting others, to grab coffee, or to grab lunch, or to invite them to your home, or to invite them to your LIFE Group.
 - Not everyone in our church has been brought in.
 - Not everyone in our church feels like they belong.
 - And they'd love for someone to invite them in.
 - They'd love for someone to invite them to a meal, or to grab coffee.
 - And so, if there's someone, the Lord has put on your heart?
 - Perhaps someone from your LIFE Group, or someone that's newer to our church.
 - Someone you met on Sunday morning, consider inviting them in, and helping them get connected.
- And if you happen to invite someone who's been coming to our church for several years, it's okay.
 - It's about time you both met, and got to know each other.
- And I want to remind you, that showing hospitality is one way we can even share Christ with others.
 - You don't have to go to another country.



- Because the truth is, there are some in our church, who are seeking Jesus Christ.
- They aren't believers, but they want to be.
- They just need other believers to come alongside them.
- And help them, and guide them.
- How can we expect to reach the world, how can we expect to influence our culture, if we can't even reach the people who're right next to us.
 - In the parable of the talents, the master says to his servant, who's been faithful with little:
 - **"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much."** Matthew 25:21
 - Now, of course, there are some who will go to other countries.
 - We need to send people out.
 - There are others who God may use to influence world leaders.
 - But let's remember remember that God has called us to be faithful with the few.
 - Let's remember to be faithful with those who are in front of us, and next to us.
- And I want you to remember that hospitality doesn't have to elaborate.
 - You don't need to hire Martha Stewart to decorate your home.
 - You don't need to Gordon Ramsey to cook you a meal.
 - Rather, what matters most, is that we open our hearts, and serve with love.
- In John chapter 13, we see an awesome picture of hospitality.



- If you remember, that's where Jesus washed his disciples' feet.
- It was customary for hosts, to provide water for guests to wash their feet.
- But it wasn't customary for the host to wash the feet of his guests.
- This was the work of a servant.
- But Jesus showed, the great extent of his love by washing his disciple's feet.
- And listen to what he says to his disciples after washing their feet.:
- **"Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."** John 13:12-14
- Here Jesus shows us, the heart of hospitality.
- It's a heart that humbly serve others.
- And then afterwards, when they ate a meal together.
 - Jesus even ate with Judas, the guy who was going to betray him.
- And after eating, like a faithful host, Jesus said that he was preparing a place for the disciples to stay.
 - He said that in his Father's house are many rooms.
 - And that he would go, and prepare a place for them.
- John chapter 13 and 14 is an excellent example of hospitality.
- It shows how, how Jesus came to this earth, not be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.



- To bring those who were outside in.
 - To show grace to his enemies.
 - And that's Jesus also calls us to do.
 - To invite the stranger, and to bring them in, and to show grace.
- Can you imagine, how God might use our church, if we had a front door that was wide open?
 - Having a heart to serve others?
 - Having a heart that welcomed everyone, even those who were difficult to love?
 - And had a passion to show people the way to the Father?
 - Here we see, how we can show the love of Christ, by inviting strangers in.

Point 3:

- Third, we can show the love of Christ, by remembering the mistreated.
- Please take a look at verse 3.
 - **“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”** Hebrews 13:3
- If you remember, the book of Hebrews was written to Christian believers who were being persecuted for their faith.
 - And it's very likely that some believers were put in prison.
 - Others were being mistreated by their community, and possibly even their own family members.
 - Even their property was stolen from them.



- And so, the writer encourages his readers to remember those in prison, and those who were being mistreated.
 - To treat them, as they would treat their own body.
- Now, one way we can apply this verse is by literally visiting those in prison.
 - And by encouraging believers in prison, to persevere in their faith.
 - To share Christ with those who don't know Christ.
 - And to remind them of the future glory that is to come.
 - And I know, that there are many of you, who are involved in prison ministry here at our church.
 - Visiting those in prison, is a wonderful way we can apply this verse to our lives.
- Another way we can apply this verse is by praying for our Christian brothers and sisters who are mistreated around the world.
 - Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, North Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, India.
 - There are many more nations I could name.
 - But there are many places where its dangerous to be a Christian.
 - There are places where you can be put in prison, and persecuted for your faith.
 - And one way we can remember those who are mistreated is by praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- And in these days, let's also remember to pray for our brothers and sisters throughout our nation.



- What the world needs today isn't an angry church, but a loving church.
- What the world needs today isn't a louder church, but a praying church.
- Someone said to me sometime ago, "I don't need your thoughts and prayers."
 - And I had to disagree with that person.
 - Because God definitely uses our prayers.
- As a personal testimony, when I've felt discouraged, or tired in ministry.
 - There are several times, when I felt the Holy Spirit give me strength, and I felt a sudden rush of God's power.
 - And later that week, someone would say to me:
 - "Pastor Tom, I've been praying for you this week."
 - And I'd know that God used their prayers to strengthen me, and encourage me.
- In the same way, God will use your prayers, to strengthen and encourage our brothers and sisters all over the world, and in our nation as well.
 - Can you imagine meeting them in heaven?
 - And God will say, "Here are your brothers and sisters, that you prayed for."
 - "Because of your prayers, they were able to persevere."
 - "And as you were praying for them, they were also praying for you."
 - "And it was their prayers, that helped you persevere."
 - Let's remember those in prison, those who are suffering for their faith.
 - Those who are being mistreated.



- I skipped over this, but in verse 2, the writer says that some were entertaining angels without knowing it.
 - Here, the writer is referring to Abraham, when he invited three men to eat at his house.
 - One of the three, was the Lord, and the other two were angels.
 - Without knowing it, Abraham was entertaining the Lord.
- Sometimes, when I meet someone new at our church, I kind of wonder if God has sent an angel to test our church.
 - Now, I don't think that this verse is teaching that God sends angels to earth, to test our hospitality.
 - But, I think it does teach, that when we serve, we need to treat everyone, as we'd treat the Lord.
 - In fact, Jesus even says that when we serve others, we're actually serving him.
 - Listen to what he says in Matthew 25:
 - **"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne...Then the King will say..."**
 - **"Come, you who 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 drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."**
 - **"Then the righteous will answer him, saying..."**
 - **"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?"**



- **“And the King will answer them...”**
- **“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”**
- We can grow in love, by preserving in brotherly love.
- We can grow in love, by inviting strangers, by bringing outsiders in.
- And we can grow in love, by remembering those who are mistreated and needing help.
- And let's remember, that we're serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - When we love others as our brothers and sisters in Christ, even those who disagree with us, even those who may have hurt us, even when it takes sacrifice, even when we humble ourselves, we're honoring the Lord Jesus Christ, we're serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Here we see, how we can show the love of Christ, by remembering those who are mistreated.

Conclusion:

- The reason Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son, was because the Pharisees and scribes couldn't understand why Jesus received sinners and invited tax collectors to eat with them.
 - And to answer them, he tells them 3 parables.
 - The parable of the lost sheep.
 - The parable of the lost coin.
 - And the parable of the lost son.



- And if you remember, when the younger son returned home, after squandering his inheritance, and repented of his sin, the older brother got very angry.
 - The father threw a party because his younger son was lost, but now, was found.
 - But the older brother refused to enter the party.
 - He felt that the father was being unfair.
 - He felt that he was owed by the father, because of all the work he did.
 - Honestly, after his younger brother left, it should've been the older brother, who went to search for his younger brother.
 - But instead of loving his brother, he was only thinking of himself.
 - He was wallowing in self-pity, and self-righteousness.
 - And so, the father had to come out to bring the older brother in, but he refused to go in.
 - And after pleading with his older son, we're never told if he went in, or if he didn't.
- And the reason Jesus didn't end the story, was because he was speaking to the Pharisees and scribes.
 - He was preaching to them, and asking them to come in.
 - To receive sinners and rejoice over those who turned from their sin.
 - He was telling them, they were the older brother.
 - And he was asking them to make a decision.
- Unfortunately, when you get to the end of Luke, metaphorically speaking, what you see is that the older brother, took a whip and flogged the father, and spit on his father, and in rage, murdered his father.



- What I mean is that, instead of rejoicing with Jesus, the Pharisees and scribes, crucified Jesus on the cross.
- And they whipped him, and spat on him, and murdered him.
- But Jesus is the older, who didn't wait for the younger brother to return home, but went out to search for his younger brother.
 - Jesus is the older brother, who keeps searching and searching, until he finds his younger brother.
 - And Jesus is the older brother, who brings his younger brother home, and rejoices, that is brother was lost, but now is found.
- It's not more anger, it's not more hostility, it's not a louder voice, but it's by continuing in brotherly love, that we can show the love of Christ, and bring peace, and shine in the darkness, and lead others to faith in Jesus Christ.
 - And so, let's continue in brotherly love.
 - Let's continue to invite others in.
 - And let's continue to remember those who are suffering.
 - So that, we can show the love of Christ.

Prayer:

- Father in heaven, we thank you for your love for us.
 - Thank you for sending your Son.
 - Thank you for reaching out to us, even when we were your enemies.
 - You didn't treat us as we deserved but you laid down your life, to give us love, to bring us in, to make us your sons and daughters.
 - And so, help us to love others as you have loved us.



- And as we love one another, we pray that we would grow, in faith, hope, and love through the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- And may the world see, that we are your disciples.