**Greater Than All - wk 24 – City of Love**

**We make our way to the last chapter. The writer has stated the case =**

**Jesus, God in the flesh, creator of all, greater than all, the only forgiver of sins. True faith perseveres, don’t give up!!!**

**Hebrews wraps up with practical challenges. Issues that hit our daily life = friends, justice, marriage, money, & church leadership.**

**Hebrews 13:1** **Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. 3 Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.**

**4 words for Love in Greek: Eros (sexual love) Storge (general family love, parent to child) Agape (unconditional love, self-giving, sacrificial) and the word used here Phileo (committed friendship and affection)**

Three Things About Philadelphia (Love)

**Ever been to the city of love – Philadelphia? Wonderful city.**

**Hebrews 13:1** **Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.**

1. **Love one another - Open our heart to Christians**

**Only 2 words in the Greek in this verse, Philadelphia menetō! Gk – Philadelphia - Brotherly love / Meneto – stay, remain!**

**Continue loving each other! Keep on loving like we’re family!**

**What does that look like? Simply - We treat other Christians as family.**

**Phileo - known as the love of equals – brother from another mother – dearly loved and trusted friend. Jesus called his disciples this.**

**We are encouraged often in this – to have it and to show it. This is friendship that feels like family – this is the body of Christ.**

**“Keep on…” menetō!**

**\*\*\* Community and connection must be pursued and preserved**

**Two powerful words – “keep loving” “continue loving” – stay in it, keep it, value it, protect it, don’t give up on it!**

**Echoes - Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

**In the natural our connection fades, weakens, collapses – it must be nurtured. Keep loving! Like all relationships – they must be cared for.**

**During Covid we saw a lot of disconnection and fading away – not because of the sermons – but feeling disconnected.**

**When you feel distant – keep loving**

**When you feel empty – keep loving**

**When you feel disconnected – keep loving**

**What happens if you don’t “continue loving”? Like all relationships - we grow apart. This is a real challenge for some of you to reengage with community.**

**Hebrews 13:2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.**

1. **Love strangers – Open our heart to people we don’t know**

**Hospitality is lit. translated – Phileo “love for strangers” -Translations fleshes it out by adding strangers to a word that already means strangers.**

**Who are these strangers – is this saying we need to welcome people off the street into our home? This is actually a reference to Christian strangers – we love the ones we know and love the one we don’t know.**

**Every time hospitality is mentioned it’s a reference to hosting traveling believers in your home. It was important as believers were often exiled and scattered – and looking temporary homes from other Christians.**

**This love for strangers (hospitality) was something all Christians were to have – it was even a requirement for elders.**

**(Hebrews 13:2, Luke 7:7-14, 1 Peter 4:9, Romans 12:13, Leviticus 19:10, 33-34, Isaiah 58:6-9, 1 Timothy 3:2 & Titus 1:8, 1 Cor 7:31-35)**

**What does that look like? For us it is a little harder to understand as we don’t have the same issues they had. But I think a good way to see is…**

**Simply - Treat Christian strangers as friends (hospitality)**

**Host a visiting missionary, temporarily open your home to another believer in need, offer to help Christians you don’t know, serve and love on people you don’t know. Serving our families kids and youth as if they were our own. Treat someone you just met on a Sunday to lunch. At the heart of this is - Family looking out for family.**

**\*\* Intentionally serving other Christians that cross your path.**

**Romans 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. (love for strangers)**

**BIG Q - What if people try to take advantage me? Funny – nothing new - people have been abusing people’s generosity for millennia.**

**At the time 2000 yrs ago - because of this command of hospitality, Christians had to watch out for people just masquerading as Christians to leech off the generosity of others. As time went on, Christian leaders taught how to recognize these deceivers.**

**The Didache was an early church “ministry manual,” written between A.D. 90 and 110 (just couple decades from the NT – first gen Christian)**

**In it there was instruction on how to tell if a person was false teacher and abusing the hospitality of the church:**

**“Let every apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread… but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet… But not everyone that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he holds the ways of the Lord. Therefore, from their ways shall the false prophet and the true prophet be known.” (Ante-Nicean Fathers, Vol 7, p380)**

**This is not scripture - but it is interesting that it was an issue early. People will seek to take advantage of our love and generosity - However – we are not to let that stop us from loving on strangers.**

**This is about brotherly love for believers – however we are to also be good Samaritans to those that cross our path. (Luke 10:25-37) When we see a need, engage and do what we can to help this person.**

**\*\*Every Christian is on mission to care for others**

**We are to take the love of Jesus with us into the world. We are in the world (but not of it) but we are in it as agents of God love not just to the people in this room – but to the stranger too.**

**“…for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” Angel in Gk is angelous – messenger) Like Abraham who welcomed wanderers into his tent only to find they were messengers of God. You never know who you might be serving.**

**13:3 Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.**

1. **Love the persecuted – Open our heart to those in need**

**This a reference to persecuted Christians – fellow believers unjustly arrested for speaking the gospel.**

**Reality is the world won’t like us or understand us – but we will not quit speaking the truth or quit on those persecuted for speaking the truth.**

**Shared with the Zone on Tue – Christianity, the world's most oppressed religious group - Persecution against C's reported in 110 countries. 11 C's killed every hour of every day. International Society for Human Rights: 80% of all acts of religious discrimination in the world are directed against C's. 100,000 C's are killed every yr because of their faith in Jesus, and hundreds of thousands of believers are "tortured, imprisoned, exiled, threatened, excluded, attacked and discriminated against on a widespread scale.**

**Possible Video -??**

**What do we do about this? Remember them, pray for them, try to encourage them, and help them – as if we were suffering ourselves.**

**The voice of the Martyrs -** [**www.persecution.com**](http://www.persecution.com)

**Help the persecuted-** [**www.htp.org**](http://www.htp.org)

**Open Door –** [**www.opendoorusa.org**](http://www.opendoorusa.org)

**We must remember and seek ways to care for those mistreated! To stand against injustice and help our brothers in Christ.**

**This is about love for believers in persecution - however we are also to have compassion for all those in prison and all those treated unjustly. (The guilty and the victim)**

**Paul led guilty prisoners to Christ – and helped them.**

**Today prisons and correctional facilities are filled with believers who need mentoring and love.**

**Simply - Do what you can to help others in need.**

**We have a responsibility to remember, love and serve them.**

**Micah 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**

**Well, that is for someone else… I don’t have the time or money.**

**\*\*We cannot ignore the oppressed and mistreated.**

**Proverbs 21:13 Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.**

**Can you hear them? Can you see them?**

**(Jesus speaking) Matt 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 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, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 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.’ (He goes on to say when you didn’t do it – you didn’t do for me either – and they were cast into the lake of fire.)**

**This is not a challenge for just the extroverts – but to all of us.**

**This is a real challenge to all of us because**

* **To love is uncomfortable**

**Takes us out of our comfort zone and into situations we have never been in.**

* **To love will often cost us something**

**Might cost a meal, some resources, cost time, and money**

* **To love means a change of plans**

**It means an interruption from our day, for our weekend plans, it disrupts our schedule. To love means flexibility.**

**(Good Samaritan – stopped and changed his days agenda)**

**Christian**

* **Keep loving one another**
* **Don’t forget to love the stranger**
* **Don’t forget to help the ones in need**

**Non-Christin**

**We love you – you are important to us. But you will never know true love apart from knowing Jesus. You can know him right now.**