GREAT LOVE LII

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: Matthew 5:43-45a.

This is the fifty-second consecutive devotion on Great Love. I did not start out to do fifty-two devotions on love but after the first I realized I needed to write a follow up and soon it became evident that this subject could not be exhausted, so here we are a year later. This is probably not the last devotion I will write on the topic of love but it will be the last in this series.

We have talked of great love and today I want to share some thoughts on love expanded. Here are some words from John Henry Jowett: “Push back the walls of family love until they include the neighbor; again push back the walls until they include the stranger; again push back the walls until they comprehend the foe.” Jesus gave us similar words in Matthew 5:43-45. Most of us love our family. We may have family members who try our patience from time to time but we love them. Many a fault has been overlooked to keep love going for our children or parents, spouses or siblings. With the love of God in our hearts that love is to be extended to include the stranger. They may look gruff and smell bad but our love is to include them. Their dialect may be different from ours but we look beyond the differences in order to love them.

I am writing this devotion on Wednesday. It has been reported on the news that sixty members of congress are not planning to attend the inauguration on Friday. Some are saying the election of President Trump is not legitimate. How do you bridge such a great divide? Jesus says to “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.” We are always called on to be the bigger person. Have the larger heart. Go the extra mile. It is not easy to love, at times, but it is always better to love. Love never fails. “Love listens when another is speaking. Love overlooks petty faults and forgives failures. Love values other people for who they are. Love expresses itself in a practical way.” Denis Waitley.

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.” Lord, help us to keep these words in our hearts.

Yours in Christ,

Brother Randy Burtram