

## Lenten Devotional March 15, 2024

### Scripture

#### 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

1 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 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 do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

### Devotion

#### The Rev. Dr. Rebecca Cole-Turner '14

During the Lenten season, we can begin to unfold the meaning of what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote about God's great love for us. He says that as followers of Jesus, we are all members of the body of Christ—in other words, we embody Christ—and that we should strive to love as our Savior loved. Otherwise, all that we do in this life will mean nothing.

When the visionary English mystic and theologian Julian of Norwich turned 30 years old in 1373 C.E., she experienced 16 visions as a response to her prayers asking for a deeper understanding of Jesus' suffering and God's love for us. In the first book written by a woman in English, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Julian asked the question, "What was God's meaning in this?" After many years of contemplation, she understood: God's meaning was love!

Both Paul and Julian are speaking of love as *agapé* (Greek: *ἀγάπη*), which is unconditional love, a love that does not demand repayment but is sacrificial, focused on the needs of the other person and not our own.

Like Paul, Julian also calls us to desire "the greater gifts" in the "still more excellent way." We cannot understand what it means to live with the *agapé* mindset of Christ unless we understand that in all that we do and say, actively striving to *be love*, to literally *embody love as he was love*, is the only action that will give us our true meaning in this life.

How might you become more loving to your family members and friends today? What is one loving action you could choose today to *be love as Christ was love* to a stranger you may meet?

### Prayer

Jesus, lover of my soul, show me how I might better express your love for all I meet and those I care for today. Help me understand ways in which I can choose to embody your love as I live out my days. Give me grace to embrace an *agapé* way of loving others in your name. Amen.