

**“LOVE ANYWAY”**  
**“When Facing Darkness”**

February is the month for “love” not only in the hallmark retail world, but also within the UMC Resist Harm Movement. After the focus on *Sacred Resistance*, the focus on love might seem a bit sentimental or light weight. It is neither. Love truly is the most powerful force in heaven and on earth. We underestimate what can happen when we love God and love each other. Love changes lives, changes hearts, transforms individuals and communities. To live out the greatest commandment to Love is one of the hardest things we ever attempt in our lives. Jesus sharing of the Beatitudes show exactly how difficult the law of Love and the behavior of faith can be. During this month, we will focus on the Beatitudes and on Paul’s words to the church at Corinth. These verses will challenge us to deepen our love and to make that love real in our world today. Each week we will be challenged to love anyway in the midst of challenges and busyness. This week ends with Valentine’s Day. People either love or hate it, but there it is. As we move through the week, do one thing each day to honor someone you love. Valentine’s Day can be filled with meaning if we focus on acts of love in Christ’s name. Write a letter, take someone out to coffee, visit someone, send a card or text, or pick up the phone. Let’s make love real this week.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“When Facing Darkness”**

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**Prayer of the Week:** *Make me steadfast in my love for you, so that I never cease loving. When I began to love, your love laid hold of my heart and would allow me to desire nothing save love. There is a delightful warmth in the loving heart, and from it has issued sweetness, and in particular, music which comes in to soothe the soul, For there you, my God and my comfort, Have set up your Temple.* - Richard Rolle b. 1300

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## STUDY GUIDE

### **Monday, February 10, 2020 Matthew 5: 13-16**

Today, we read the first part of this passage. Today we read these words of how the “blessed” of God are to be salt and light to the world. Here Jesus uses very simple metaphors to speak of a deep faith. For Jesus, believing was not enough, faith was made real through the lives of those who followed; being the “light” of God shining into the darkness of the world and bringing the “flavors” of God into the tastelessness of the world. Salt and light once incorporated, change the whole of what they are a part of and can no longer be distinguished. So, sometimes believers are called to change the whole of which they are apart without being noticeably different. That can be hard in a world that honors individualism and being the “winner.” *How do you light your world in a way that truly makes a difference? Does your light need to be acknowledged or does your light shine in such a way it can be experienced as the light of Christ?*

### **Tuesday, February 11, 2020 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5**

Paul continues his letter saying that it is not wisdom or in academic terms knowledge that he proclaims what he knows, it is Christ that is proclaimed. It is in “weakness, fear and much trembling” that Paul comes to share what he has experienced in Jesus. He does not want the church at Corinth to base what they know on him, his personality or his learning. He wants them to know the power of God in Christ. Paul is trying to use the light of Christ within him to show how God changes lives. Certainly, a powerful orator can move people the way they want them to move or think, but Paul wants Christ to be the center of what he does so that the faith of the Corinthians is based on something deeper and bigger. Paul wants their faith based on the saving grace of Christ. Unlike a “star” on a team or in a show, Paul wants everyone to be part of the community of faith without individual success. The ideas of coming with weakness, fear and trembling is unheard of in this culture. *How do you understand Paul’s words in terms of faith and witness? How you ever been afraid or felt weak when trying to live out or share your faith? Does it become difficult to love when you are “just” part of the community of faith?*

### **Wednesday, February 12, 2020 1 Corinthians 2: 6-13**

Again, Paul is trying to articulate how God’s is above and beyond what human beings understand. Those that understand and believe hear the “wisdom” that Paul shares. Others do not understand it. Either way, it is the Spirit who reveals all things in God and in Christ Jesus. In faith, much of our walk with Christ goes against what is normally understood. It is crazy that Jesus tells ordinary everyday folk they “are light” as opposed to those who are considered special or talented. So, Paul notes that it is difficult to comprehend anything on our own because it is God’s Spirit who lends understanding. *What has God revealed to you through God’s Spirit? Are there things you are longing to understand? Today, ask for God’s Spirit to give you heart and mind of wisdom.*

### **Thursday, February 13, 2020 Matthew 5: 17-20**

These are not easy words to read. After all the “blessings” Jesus challenges his listeners to a deeper and more faithful righteousness. In other passages Jesus challenges the religious leaders: the Pharisees, but here he uses those leaders as those his followers should emulate. Why you might ask? Because love is not an invitation for religious folk to do whatever they want. Love is not permission to hurt others or do bad things in the name of “love.” Love is faithful and true. Love doesn’t hurt or harm others. Love is the fulfillment of all laws: love is justice, mercy, kindness and faithfulness. *Today, pray that God might help you be more faithful, just, kind and merciful to everyone you meet.*

### **Friday, February 14, 2020 1 Corinthians 13**

HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!!! Today is more than a card, chocolate or flower holiday. Originally this day was a Christian celebration of a saint. Saint Valentine was a martyr for the faith and was known for reaching out in love to others. Today’s scripture reminds us that love is many things. Love is a gift we share; love is something we embody. On this day, there are opportunities to share love to be love, to be light and salt so the world can know and experience God’s Love in Christ. The world needs that love. *Do something today, in name of the love of God in Christ.*