

“Ahhh . . . this Is the Life!”—Hebrews 13:1-6

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Ahhh . . . this Is the Life!”, is Hebrews 13:1-6 → *Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

How would you describe “the good life?” Coming home from a hard day’s work and reclining in a chair to relax with a cold drink may cause a person to say, “Ahhh . . . this is the life!” Many in our culture view “the good life” as bound up in being financially stable, married with children, enjoying a comfortable home and community with friends and activities to fill their lives with blessings galore! Vacations, indulging in hobbies and even retirement are

all dynamics of life which could cause someone to say, “Ahhh . . . this is the life! I’m livin’ the dream!” Yet, even in the midst of all these dynamics of life people seem to constantly be searching for “the good life.”

Our text describes “the good life” as being bound up in one word: *love*. Actually, it has to do with the expression of our love as Jesus summed it up when asked by an expert in the Old Testament Law to state the greatest commandment. Jesus said to him in Matthew 22:37-39 → *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* Love has to do with both the devotion of our hearts and our actions toward others. Thus, *the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (cf. Galatians 5:14)

Verse 1 of our text commands us: *Let brotherly love continue.* The *brotherly love* to which God directs us is specifically a love displayed amongst fellow believers in Christ Jesus, made members of His family through baptism. (cf. Galatians 3:26-29) This relationship based upon the love of God in Christ Jesus was crucial in light of the context of the Christians in the first century Church, many of whom were experiencing severe persecution by members of their biological families, relatives and others in the world who hated Jesus. The writer to these Christians encouraged them to remain perseverant and

faithful to Jesus in Hebrews 10:32-34, telling them to remember *the former days when, after they were enlightened, they endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated . . . and they joyfully accepted the plundering of their property.*

This context clearly is not what most people would consider to be “the good life.” Far from it! Yet, showing *brotherly love* was crucial because satan can get a foothold in the lives of those fellow Christians not experiencing such persecution and hardships and produce self-righteousness in their hearts toward those who were being thus persecuted. This leads to self-righteous judgments about their behavior even to the point of believing that they deserved such treatment. If they would have been more gentle, diplomatic or understanding in their “approach” while confessing faith in Christ then maybe they wouldn’t be in such dire straits. This happened to the apostle Paul by other Christians, through whom the devil tried to discredit his teachings and confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in the midst of his persecutions.

It is important display this *brotherly love* by not neglecting to *show hospitality to strangers*. (cf. Verse 2) If your fellow brother or sister in Christ has had property confiscated where can s/he find refuge, shelter and food? Or how about those who have left “the good life” of comfort in order to take God’s

Law and Gospel to people in other places? How does God provide for their needs? By the hospitality of fellow Christians acting in *brotherly love*! 3 John 5-8 says: *Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

Another way to display this *brotherly love* for Christians imprisoned for their confession of Christ is expressed in verse 3 of our text: *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body* (i.e. of Christ). Many times in the Roman government system people were imprisoned to simply await their punishment and those with whom they were in close relationship were expected to minister to their needs while imprisoned, even providing their food. Christian *brotherly love* will meet those needs along with spiritual encouragement through sharing God's Word and prayer.

This *brotherly love* shared in the love of Christ will also respect the institution of marriage and the vocations of husband and wife. We will display a proper respect for sexuality within the bonds of marriage between one man

and one woman. Any activity in thought, word or deed outside of this plan constitutes sexual immorality and adultery. Love for the Lord Jesus Christ will express itself by respecting this expression of love as well as upholding those in the vocations of husband and wife properly.

Having property confiscated and being left with little or nothing challenges our contentment and provides opportunity once again for the devil to get a foothold upon us and tempt us to covetousness and greed, desiring what doesn't rightly belong to us. However, living "the good life" in comfort also provides a "playground" for the devil's tempting us to give in to a false sense of security and happiness bound up in our love of money and stuff. This is why we are commanded in verse 5 of our text: *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have.* No matter what the circumstances in our life the Christian can trust God's promise—"I will never leave you nor forsake you"—and confidently confess, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (cf. Verse 6)

It appears that with so much temptation, sin and suffering which a Christian encounters in life that it is impossible for him to sit back and say, "Ahhh . . . this is the life!" However, God wants us to have "the good life." In fact, the life He intended every one of you to have when He created it is described by Him as *very good!* (cf. Genesis 1:31) Jesus said in John 10:10 → *I came that they may*

*have life and have it **abundantly**.* “The good life” is realized only through faith in Jesus and His atoning work for the forgiveness of your sins.

In Divine Service we gather to experience this “good life” **in Christ!** Turn to page 151 in your hymnal. Notice we recognize “the good life” is experienced only through faith **in Christ** as we confess our sins together. Notice the outcome of this “good life” **in Christ**—“Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, **so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name.**”

We experience this “good life” when we partake of His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins in the Lord’s Supper! Turn to page 201 in your hymnal. Notice what we ask in the “Post-Communion Collects.” We ask God to “strengthen us through” this gift of forgiveness in communion “in faith toward” the LORD “and **in fervent love toward one another.**” We ask God to “rule our hearts and minds by” His “Holy Spirit **that we may be enable constantly to serve” Him.** This is where “the good life” is experienced! We serve God by serving our neighbor in *brotherly love!*

Our worship together in divine service brings us to “the good life” which is actually ours forever in Christ’s forgiveness! We can truly say, “Ahhh . . . this is the life!” Experiencing this love of God in Christ Jesus is displayed in the *brotherly love* we share as we now can *serve in the new way of the Spirit and*

*not in the old way of the written code.* (cf. Romans 7:6) In this service we can truly say, “Ahhh . . . this is the life!” Burdens are lifted! Sin is completely forgiven! We get to live in *brotherly love* together as we serve Christ by meeting the needs of our neighbor! “Ahhh . . . this is truly the good life!” Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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