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Jessica: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart, where  
we're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan  
your sermon or teaching lesson.  
I'm your host and producer, Jessica  
Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmidt and Dr. Peter Nafzger.  
They're both professors of homiletics  
here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.  
You can hear all about us in our  
introductory episode, but you can trust  
me that they are pretty good preachers.  
All right, let's get started.  
Peter, where are we in the church year?

Peter: We're talking about the fourth Sunday  
after the Epiphany, a time when we continue to think  
about Jesus coming not just for his  
people of Israel, but for all nations of all times and all places.

Jessica: And what are the texts this week, David?

David: The texts for the fourth Sunday after the  
Epiphany are Jeremiah 1, 1 Corinthians  
12-13, Luke 4, and Psalm 71.

Jessica: Now if you are choosing to observe the  
purification of Mary and presentation of Jesus this Sunday,  
that gospel reading you can find in our  
episode about the first Sunday after Christmas.  
So if you are using those texts, go back a few weeks.  
First Sunday after Christmas has the same gospel reading.  
As always, I ask each of you to tell me  
which text you would preach on.  
So to determine who goes first, this  
week's text includes the passage in 1 Corinthians,  
when I became a man I put away childish things.  
What is one toy that you played with as a  
child that you've had to put away now  
because you're an adult?  
What was your favorite toy?

Peter: I had this homemade horse on a stick.  
She quilted or stitched or something,  
this blue horse head, and I would ride that along.  
My little brother had a red one and my  
older brother had a green one, and we would ride

around these horsies when I was really little.  
My brothers had those too.

Jessica: That's awesome.  
Cool.

David: I think I had to put away Jarts.  
Do you remember jarts?

Peter: Oh wow, yeah.

Jessica: What is that?

David: They were these metal missiles that you threw at each other.  
You were supposed to throw them to go into the ground.

Peter: Somebody didn't think through that.  
I know.

David: We should have put them away before I grew up.  
Yes, yes.  
But yes, Jarts was fun.

Jessica: Alright.  
One of my favorite toys was my Cabbage Patch Kid.  
Those were huge when I was little.  
Cabbage Patch Kids have more in common  
with horses than with darts that hurt people.  
So Peter, you win.

Jessica: You get to go first.

Peter: Alright, good.  
Well, I am going to suggest a sermon on 1  
Corinthians, mostly chapter 13.

David: I am so glad you're doing that.

Peter: Why are you so glad?

David: Because it is such a familiar wedding  
text that I think it would be nice to  
hear it not in the context of a wedding.  
And it will also, however, resonate for a  
lot of people because they used it in their wedding.  
So I think it's a win-win.

Peter: Yeah, I mean this is, you're right, I  
think you only think about this text generally with weddings.  
But it is, you know, we're a week and a

half away from Valentine's Day.  
And so there's that coming up.  
In some ways it's a preemptive, let's  
think about love in advance before it's thrust before you.  
Give people a little bit of a perspective  
on how to think about love as it comes up at this time.  
I was thinking maybe we could start,  
Jessica, with reading verses 2 and 3.

Jessica: 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 have not love, I am nothing.  
If I give away all I have, and if I  
deliver up my body to be burned, but have  
not love, I gain nothing.

Peter: All right, so just start by thinking a  
little bit about the importance of love.  
This follows, of course, we've been the  
last two weeks, we were in 1 Corinthians 12, right?  
Where we were talking about gifts of the  
Spirit and the different manifestations of the Spirit.  
And I was thinking about the Spirit, our  
reflection of the Spirit lead to this conclusion that  
Paul has about love being really, really important.  
And it just struck me as I was reading  
those two verses you just read, what Paul compares  
love to as a potential alternative for what's important.  
Love is one of these concepts and one of  
these ideas that we think about and we talk a lot about in our culture.  
And so I kind of want to take this time  
to think about Paul moving from the  
Spirit that he's given us to this love.  
It actually reminded me during Advent  
back in December, my congregation did a  
an evening prayer in the evenings, which is,  
I think, a really lovely service.

Jessica: Yeah, we did that too at my church.

Peter: But it struck me that the way it talked  
about the Spirit and several of the hymns  
or the songs in that service talk about the  
Spirit as the Spirit of love.  
And so I kind of like that move from the Spirit.  
Sometimes we reduce the Spirit to kind of  
like an agent who gives us faith or the

Spirit who kind of enlightens us.  
But I want to think about the Spirit as  
the one who leads us to a life of love.

Jessica: Before you continue to talk about love, I  
think those of us in the pew would benefit  
from a definition because I absolutely,  
when you say love, I think of romantic  
love or even family love.  
So if you say, if I have everything but  
don't have love, it sounds to me if I have everything  
but I don't have a dear friend or a  
spouse who I love, then I'm nothing.  
But I don't think that's what this verse is about.  
So maybe you could give us a definition.

Peter: Well I won't give it to you, but I think  
Paul, he doesn't really give us a definition, but  
he does unpack love a little bit.  
So actually I was going to ask you to  
read also verses 4 through 7 if you would.

Jessica: Love is patient and kind.  
Love does not envy or boast.  
It is not arrogant or rude.  
It does not insist on its own way.  
It is not irritable or resentful.  
It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but  
rejoices with the truth.  
Love bears all things, believes all  
things, it hopes all things, endures all things.

Peter: Does anything stand out to you when you  
read those verses, either you, about what love,  
what Paul doesn't say about love?

Jessica: It sounds like something that you can do  
instead of something that you can feel.

Peter: Yeah, it's kind of, I mean love is the  
subject of all these sentences.  
Love is the actor.  
Love does things.  
Love is things.  
So it's almost love is kind of personified in a way.  
Maybe you've heard people before say, you  
know, just replace the word Jesus with love with these verses.  
And I think that's kind of a nice thing to think about.  
And I was thinking about helping, your

question about defining love, what is love?  
I think those three could be a way to define what love is.  
Patience, kindness, and forbearance, or  
kind of a bearing with others.  
And so I'd want to think about love in those terms.  
And when I was thinking about that, I was  
thinking about, you know, in Bonhoeffer's  
Life Together, he has this section on the ministry to others.  
He has, and he's got a section called  
Ministry of Bearing, of forbearing, of suffering with.  
And I think that encapsulates this  
patience, kindness, bearing all things.  
And so let me just read a quote from Bonhoeffer's  
Life Together that I think is kind of interesting.  
He says this, the brother is a burden to  
the Christian, precisely because he is a Christian.  
For the pagan, the other person never becomes a burden at all.  
He simply sidesteps every burden that others may impose on him.  
The Christian, however, must bear the burden of a brother.  
He must suffer and endure the brother.  
It is only when he is a burden that  
another person is really a brother and  
not an object to be manipulated.  
And you know, what I'm thinking about is  
a sermon that gets beyond kind of the  
touchy-feely things of love and the superficial ways  
we talk about love and talk about love as  
being patient and kind and specifically bearing with others.  
Genuine love, true love, is that which  
loves those that are hard to love, I think.  
So I'm reading with my son and my wife,  
actually, CS Lewis's Space Trilogy right now.  
We talked about that.

David: Oh, that's good.

Jessica: I love those.  
And there's this fascinating conversation  
between Ransom and the lady, right, Eve,  
kind of, and talking about the true love of  
God obeys him even when it's not easy.  
And I'm thinking about true love of  
someone else is patient with people even  
when they're really hard to be patient with, bears  
with people when they're really hard to bear with.  
And that's not the kind of love we see in  
our culture, I think, at all.  
People who are hard to bear with, we

either dismiss or we steamroll and we just turn away from.  
And so I'm thinking about the love that, true love is love that bears.  
And of course, this is God's love for us, right? That God bears with us and he's patient with us and he's kind to us and he loves us.  
And that's, of course, Jesus.  
I don't know, Jessica, is this kind of thinking about love, is this something that is... you think helpful to people or what do you think?

Jessica: I think it would be helpful if you gave us a heads up during the beginning of the sermon. Let us know there are different kinds of love and that usually the kind of love we think of is a feeling towards people. But when Jesus says, love your neighbor, he's not saying be warm and fuzzy in your feelings towards them. He's saying to show them love. It's an activity. It's not a feeling. Right?  
And so if you make sure that we know that at the beginning of the sermon, then I can listen to this differently. Don't you think that normally if you hear the word love, love is patient? You think, well, that if I have loving feelings towards somebody, I should be patient with them.

Peter: Right.

Jessica: And that's not what you're saying.

Peter: Right.  
And that's where the... when I was thinking about a title for this sermon, I was thinking about calling something like the burden of love. But that kind of is a little negative.

Jessica: Well, love is a command, right? Jesus said, love your neighbor, love God. That's different.

Peter: But I think the point is the love is hard and love does not come naturally to people who are sinful and who are broken. I tend to love myself and to love others,

if they're lovable, well, then fine.  
But there's a lot of people who aren't lovable.

David: You know, I don't know.  
For me, I think it would be helpful to  
think a little bit about Corinth and what is going  
on there and what the Apostle Paul is finding there.

Peter: Sure, yeah.

David: So, you know, from his discussion of the  
people in Corinth that he has that whole list of,  
you know, adulterers and immoral and  
homosexuals and such were some of you, right?  
So the people in the church in Corinth  
were very aware of one another's faults, very aware  
of what these people had been before they  
were brought into the faith.  
And then you've got these people who have  
been gifted by God with the Holy Spirit,  
been given gifts that they can use in service to others.  
And it makes sense to me that if I was  
absolutely nothing and that I was brought into this community  
and I was given this gift, that I would  
think that that gift is what made me the  
best thing ever, and that that was what I was  
bringing into the congregation.  
So it makes sense that people would be  
fighting over their gifts and that they would be dividing  
themselves up and kind of competing with  
one another in their gifts.  
And then Paul here is just kind of trying  
to bring this mess back to something that  
says, you know, all of these gifts you  
have, they're absolutely nothing if you don't have love.  
And so there's a real focus on how you  
use your gifts, how you use your, you  
know, your relationships, how you act in these things.  
And so love takes on a very active  
quality rather than just kind of this  
emotional feeling that I have.  
It's how I am interacting with people in  
this community that God's created.

Peter: I think that's kind of what I'm trying to  
get at and to think about the relational  
aspect of love, to get it outside of an internal  
feeling, to get outside of kind of what's

in your heart and more think about how do we interact with one another.  
And that is helpful to think about, you know, Corinth was an absolute hot mess.

Jessica: Tell me about it.  
Tell me about Corinth.

Peter: Oh, you just had divisions.  
You had people, you know, pitting spiritual gifts, immediate contacts, pitting one spiritual gift, this one's better than yours.

David: And then they're pastors, right?  
I mean, so, you know, I follow Cephas, I follow Paul, I follow Apollos.  
I don't follow any of those.  
I follow Christ, you know, I mean, you've got the whole mess at the Lord's Supper with people who are not caring for each other.  
They're getting drunk before they have the Lord's Supper.  
They're not saving anything for the people who are poor.

David: You have the agape meal.  
You've got the rich who are eating.  
Everybody knows who they are.

Peter: You've got the lawsuits.  
And internally, I mean, it starts to sound familiar.

Jessica: Yeah, it seems really relevant.

Peter: Yeah, but you've got to, so you've got to, let's just say your congregation has got some issues.  
Then, you know, talking about love without the baggage of marriage, without the baggage of kind of this feeling, this cultural thing, to help people see that love is about patience, kindness, bearing with one another.  
As God has been patient, kind, and has bared with us in Christ, that would be, to me, a helpful way to get at the underlying relationships in your congregation, that it's a way of relating to one another.  
It's your patience with others, your kind to others, you bear others.  
That's why I like the Bonhoeffer quote, because it gets to, you know, when you're a Christian, you bear with your brothers and your



sisters, because God loves them, because God loves you.  
That's our way of life.

Jessica: Even if we don't like them?

Peter: Even if we don't happen to like them.

Jessica: Great, Peter, thank you.  
David, what about you?  
What would you preach on?

David: Oh, I think I would preach on Luke 4, the Gospel reading.  
And I like this reading because it's so  
long, and it involves so many different things.  
So the first thing would be from the  
opening of the day in the synagogue where Jesus is teaching.  
Now remember, he had just been in the  
synagogue in Nazareth, and we know how that ended up, right?

Jessica: The cliff.

David: Right, the cliff.  
Not too good.  
So now he's going to preach in Capernaum.  
And Jessica, if you could read verse 35.  
This is after the sermon is done, there's  
this unclean demon that appears.  
And if you could read verse 35.

Jessica: But Jesus rebuked him saying, be silent and come out of him.  
And when the demon had thrown him down in  
their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm.

David: Okay, and I love that last line, having  
done him no harm.  
There's this tagline that this guy was  
possessed with a demon, Jesus rebukes the demon, it  
leaves him, and oh by the way, he had done him no harm.  
Which I like that.  
But here, I think the thing that I would  
have been struck with was the power.  
The power of Jesus.  
That he is able to rebuke unclean spirits and they obey him.  
There's this fight between the demon and Jesus.  
The demon knows who he is, the demon  
thinks he's going to destroy him, Jesus  
casts the demon out.  
And it, I don't know, if you think about  
a synagogue service, Jesus is preached,

we're taught that all of a sudden we see who Jesus is, he has this kind of power. It makes you want to think about the sermons that we listen to, right? Because a lot of times I think we can be bored by sermons. I don't know, we hear them, but they're just kind of, you know, okay, now we have to have the sermon, and then we, after that, after the sermon, let's do the offertory and the all that, it's just part of the service. And all of the sudden, after the service is over, you see that the guy who just preached to you is able to cast demons out. It's like, whoa, wait a second here, right? The person who just talked to us is the one who had created the world and has the power to place demons, cast out demons from people and preserve us from harm. It would make you reconsider what you heard. And it's, so I think the first thing I would give thanks for would be that this God who has all power, who rules all things and even rules the evil spirits, that this God decides to talk to me in the sermon on Sunday morning, right? So that'd be my first prayer of thanksgiving, would be the power of God that I see in this moment. Peter, what are you thinking?

Peter: No, I'm thinking that's, you know, it is, it's kind of astounding, this, what Jesus, just with his word, cast this demon out. I mean, it's such a foreign world for us that we don't even think about these kinds of powers.

David: Yeah, and he's not calling on another power to cast him out. He's doing it himself.

Peter: On his own, yeah.

David: Right.

Jessica: And the demon has to listen right away. It can't even harm him anymore. When Jesus says get out, it can't even do him harm.

David: Yeah. So then after this amazing event of the casting out of demons, we see this cosmic rule of

Christ that has spoken to us in a sermon.  
Then we go to Peter's house for dinner.  
And unfortunately, Peter's mother-in-law has a fever.  
And here's what happens.  
Jessica, if you could read verse 39.

Jessica: And he stood over her and rebuked the fever and it left her.  
And immediately she rose and began to serve them.

David: Okay.  
So the word rebuked is used, right?  
And that's the exact same word that was  
used for the demon, I'm thinking.

Peter: Oh yeah.

David: Right?  
And so it's kind of asking you to hold  
these two things together that the guy who rebukes  
demon takes care of the common cold.  
It just is so...  
I don't...  
To me, it's bizarre because these are two  
extremely different situations.  
A person who's possessed with an unclean  
spirit and somebody who has a cold.

Jessica: Really you think it was just a cold?

David: Well...

Jessica: A very high fever back then?  
Wouldn't that have been more dangerous?

David: Well, I guess it could be.  
I'd be more likely...  
I'd more likely downplay it myself.  
But I'm just saying a fever versus the  
demon, which do you want?

Jessica: Okay.  
Yep.  
Yep.

Peter: You're right.  
When you put it like that.

David: If you're putting it like that, it's  
going to be less...  
I think it's less threatening than a demon.

I see...

What I see here is that we saw the power of Jesus, right, in that first one. And now at Peter's house, we see His compassion. That He who has the power to cast out demons actually cares about someone having a cold. And to me that's amazing. Because sometimes you can think, you know, all my problems in my life aren't important enough and, you know, God wouldn't pay attention to me and to this problem that I've got. And I shouldn't even bring this up to prayer and God because there's all, you know, there's people in Children's Hospital dying of cancer. Why should I care about my kid having a cold? And yet here you see, well, no, you should. Because the guy you're talking to, not only does he have power to rule over overall things, but he has the compassion and he actually does care about someone who has a fever. So then you get to the next one, which is word of spreading about what Jesus is doing. And so all the people from the town now come and they bring, you know, all of the problems that are happening among them. And so if you could, Jessica, if you could read verse 40.

Jessica: Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them.

David: I like that phrase. He laid His hands on every one of them. That is, Jesus could have just stood there and said, okay, all the demons get out of here. Right? Let's do kind of a mass exorcism. But instead he took the time to lay His hand on every one of them. That every one of them was important. And so for me, we've got this love of God that is powerful. We've got this love of God that's compassionate. Even if you have a fever, He's caring about it. And now we've got a love of God that is personal. He's going to take the time to touch every single person. So and then we get to the last one. Now it's morning and the day has come and

Jesus is outside the city in a desolate place and the people are seeking Him. Obviously they're probably wanting more things. And if Jessica, if you could read verse 43.

Jessica: But he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."

David: Okay. So at this point we see that our Lord is missional. That this God who was all powerful, this God who was compassionate, this God who loves us in a very personal way, has love for more than just us, has love for all people. And he's missional and he's going out into the world. And for us, he's sending us out in the world to invite people to come into our church to listen to the word of a God who is powerful, compassionate, personal and missional.

Peter: Yeah, I think that's helpful.

David: Thanks David.  
That's all for today.  
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I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau.  
Join us next week here at Lectionary Kickstart when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

David: A fever verses the demon which one do you want?

Jessica: Okay, yeah.

Peter: When you put it like that.