

**love never gives up**

Matthew 9:32-38

February 12, 2017

Give up.

You're tired. You deserve a break. Give up.

You've done all you could, more than your share. Give up.

The emotional cost is too high. It's not worth it. Give up.

Some things can't be fixed. Some people don't want to be helped. It's a lost cause. She's a lost cause. Give up.

It's bigger than you. It's beyond your pay grade. It's somebody else's problem now. It's out of your hands. Give up.

You can't change the world. What you do won't make a difference. It doesn't matter. Give up.

What will be will be, regardless. Give up.

You can't, so let God take care of it. Give it to God. Give up.

*Love never gives up.*

When does love give up? Never! Because? Because for love to give up would be the very denial of its existence! Because love is about that "one."

Love is not about itself. Love is about that "one:" caring about that "one," investing in that "one," sacrificing for that "one," laser-focussed on the happiness and well-being of that "one." If love gave up, it would be giving up that "one," caring no more about that "one," invested no more in the happiness of that "one," and love would cease to exist, because love doesn't exist without its object. So if love is, love never gives up.

*Love never gives up, and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.*

My faith falters. My hope sags. My patience fails. Should I give up? Has my love failed? Has my love proved to be no love at all?

*Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up.*

This is descriptive language, not proscriptive! It's not: Love must be patient. Love should be kind. Love must try very hard not to give up. No, it's: Love is patient. Love is kind. Love never give up. Love is.

Love is! That's the good news -- love is! That's the gospel -- love is!  
Love exists. It's there. Love is not merely a dream or a possibility or an ideal.  
It's there. It's real. God is love, and because God is, love is. Love is what it is  
and it is there. It is there, embodied in Jesus. Love is. Love is Jesus.

Jesus is patient and kind, and Jesus never gives up.

They brought to Jesus a man who couldn't talk because he had a demon in  
him, and Jesus drove that demon out and the man could talk. Jesus healed  
him, because he loved him, because he loved that "one."

But the Pharisees complained: "It is the chief of the demons who gives Jesus  
the power to drive out demons." Can you imagine it? This man has been  
delivered from his suffering. This man has been set free from his torment.  
Something good has happened as anybody can see, and they say Jesus is  
doing the devil's work!

Calling love the work of the devil. An El Salvadoran priest invests his life in the  
welfare of the poor, and they call him a communist, and they shoot him. You  
stand up for the rights of refugees and say they should be welcome here, too,  
and they call you a traitor. You love your gay neighbor and defend his rights,  
and they say your love does not come from God.

Calling love the work of the devil. Doesn't it make you want to give up?  
Doesn't it make you want to give up trying to love ... them?

But Jesus didn't give up. He kept on healing, kept on preaching, kept on  
teaching, kept on engaging the Pharisees even though he won over only a few, a  
precious few -- Nicodemus, Joseph, Saul.

He didn't give up because it wasn't about him, about his work or his mission or  
his reputation or his welfare. It was about them, those "ones," all the ones  
helpless and worried, like sheep without a shepherd. He saw them. He saw  
them all, and his heart was filled with pity for them. His heart was filled with  
love for them.

Worried and helpless, helpless and worried. Many, so many of them. Too  
many of them?

Jesus didn't give up. Jesus didn't give them up. He continued to do the work  
of the kingdom, to gather in the harvest of God's love. And he prayed. He  
prayed for more workers and he asked his disciples to pray for more workers.

Jesus saw the crowds, the crowds of people helpless and worried, like sheep  
without a shepherd, and he prayed for more shepherds. Because Jesus won't  
do it alone. It wouldn't be love, it wouldn't be love that never gives up, if Jesus  
did it alone, if Jesus left all these people without a shepherd, all these people  
he would never get to.

What if Jesus can't do it alone? What if we are meant to be his shepherds? What if we are meant to be ... him? To be his body, to be his hands, to be his words, to be love, to be his love, to be the love of Christ embodied? What an awesome responsibility! What an awesome privilege! To be Jesus!

Love never gives up: the love of Jesus for you and the love that is Jesus lived through you.