

Colossians 1:1-14
Paul prays they continue
to love



Psalm 15
Christian life of love



Luke 10:25-37
Good Samaritan – love for
my neighbor

This past week in Vacation Bible School, we journeyed to the top of several mountains in the Bible – none that reached the heights of Mount Everest. Mount Everest reaches 29,029 feet above sea level. If you think about it, that's more than twice as high as any of the fifty some 14ers we have here in Colorado.

A few years ago I read a book called Into Thin Air that was a journalist's experience climbing Mount Everest. He happened to be with a group that tried to reach the summit as a powerful storm swept in with hurricane force winds. Scientists later would claim the storm sucked much of the oxygen off the mountain so that it was %14 less than its already low levels. On that climb in 1996, many bad choices were made that day leading to the deaths of 8 in the author's group and another 7 on the opposite face of the mountain.

It's because of those dangers that guide services still today will not guarantee that all their clients will make it to the summit. The statistics say that only %50 of those who attempt the climb will even make it. 50%!

God's Word this morning presents us with a bigger question: "LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?"

If the air on Mount Everest is thin, the atmosphere in God's presence, on his holy hill is suffocating. There his power intimidates; his holiness overwhelms. Who could ever survive a climb up that hill? (During this summer series I've pointed out a few key things to understanding the Psalms. I've told you to look for words and phrases that repeat. Last week, the key passage in the Psalm vicar preached on was right in the middle of the Psalm and that is often the case. Another key to understanding the Psalms is to look at the Psalms surrounding it. Obviously Psalm 15 follows Psalm 14 – here's the key thought of that Psalm: "The fool says in his heart there is no god... There is no one who does good... *and a little later* – There is no one who does good, not even one.") Now Psalm 15 comes and says who may live on God's holy hill, in his presence. No one! No one except those who know the One who has ascended in our place... (In VBS, we followed Jesus to the top of the highest hills -

- To the Mount of Transfiguration where we saw a glimpse of Jesus' glory and who his is – Jesus is God's Son (have kids do the hand clap).
- To Mt. Calvary or Golgotha where we saw how Jesus is our Savior (kids). For there on that hill, on the cross on top of that hill, Jesus took away our sins and made us holy and blameless before our God.
- To the mountain of Ascension – where we saw Jesus go to prepare a place for us in heaven, with God, forever and ever.

Who may live on God's holy hill? Those who believe in Jesus. Those who know what he has done for them. And those who show that faith in their lives.

- The Bible says, "Make every effort... to be holy; for without holiness no one will see the Lord."
- Jesus said it this way, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing."
- Or here is another passage, a simpler passage: "We love because he first loved us."

And that's Psalm 15. We live in God's presence and dwell on his holy hill by showing the love of Christ in our lives. I'm guessing you missed it when we read through the Psalm, but there were 10 ways we show how we

belong on God's holy hill. Some commentators think they coincide with the 10 Commandments given on another mountain we climbed this past week, Mount Sinai. Or perhaps it's just a list of 10, because there are 10 fingers to count them off. This morning I'm going to break that list of 10 in half and walk you through the five ways God's people show the love of Christ in their lives.

1. Walk blamelessly (v.2a).

When I studied the word blameless, I found out another meaning could be sincere. Who may live on your holy hill? The one who is sincere. Then I studied the word "sincere." I found out it comes from two Latin words – "sine" and "cere" and literally means "without wax." It goes back to the days when the Romans would go and buy clay pots. Some of those pots would crack in the kiln where they were baked and hardened. The potter then would pour melted wax in the cracks, smooth it out and then paint it to cover up the wax. So if you went to the marketplace you of course would search for a pot with no wax.

Do you get the picture of the Christian life? Blameless, sincere, doing what is right because we know that we represent Christ and God's love for us. That's who lives on God's holy hill.

2. Speak truthfully (v.2b-3a)

Four boys skipped classes one day to go to the Rockies game. The next day when their teacher asked them where they were, they answered, "Our tire went flat and we couldn't get to school." She informed them that they would have to make up a test and asked them to take out a pencil and paper. When they were ready she said, "Here is your question: which tire went flat?"

The Christian who knows Jesus, who knows that he is the way, the TRUTH and the life, will speak the truth. And notice where David, the Psalm writer, says that truth comes from: from the heart, from Christ who dwells there and the Spirit who guides us in the truth. So we speak the truth in love, not slandering because we are in the construction business, not the deconstruction business. We build one another up in love, rather than tear them down for our own benefit. That's who lives on God's holy hill.

3. Wrongs nobody (v.3b-4a)

And "Who is my neighbor?" That was the question you heard asked earlier in our Gospel lesson. Obviously it wasn't the thieves and robbers who wronged their neighbor and left him on the side of the road as if dead. Obviously it wasn't the priest or the Levite, men of God, who passed by on the other side. They wronged their neighbor as well – not by what they did do but by what they didn't do.

No, the one who acted neighborly and who loved was the Samaritan. And how can you hear that parable without thinking of the one who so loved the world and gave himself for every single person who has ever lived. How can you not think of Jesus as our Good Samaritan who even while we were still sinners, gave his life for us. And we who live with him and dwell with him by faith echo his life to all – without racism or prejudice – love that stretches across cultural differences and economic differences and age differences.

4. Man of his Word (v.4b)

Here is a classic pastor joke: Three pastors were discussing how each of their churches had problems with prairie dogs infesting their properties. The first pastor explained how he trapped them and transported them to another place but somehow they repopulated and were as big a problem as ever. The other pastor talked about how he would chase them with his dog and throw stones at them to scare them away, but they just seemed to laugh at him. The third pastor, though, said he figured it out. When asked how he got rid of them he said, "That's easy. I just took them through instruction, confirmed them all and haven't seen them since."

We make oaths to be faithful to God at our confirmation even facing death rather than turn away from it. The Psalm says, God's people who dwell with him through Christ, keep that oath even when it is difficult.

Yesterday a young man and young woman made their promises to each other to be husband and wife as long as they both shall live. And they make that promise not just when it is convenient and their love is

romantic and powerful, but when it is difficult as well. They make those vows in sickness and in health; in good times and in bad; for richer or for poorer.

God's people serve here at church even when it is a sacrifice of time – because that is what we do.

God's people help their neighbor not looking to get anything back because we know the One who first loved us.

5. Gives generously (v.5)

The Samaritan gave – cleansing his neighbors wounds without looking for anything in return. He paid for the man's care – without looking to get repaid. He promised to return and cover all the unpaid bills – without worrying about what it would cost him. He gave generously...

And we who live on God's holy hill, who have been loved so much, blessed by God with so much, forgiven so much – love much and give generously.

Let me take you back to the first characteristic of the one who lives and dwells with God. “He whose walk is blameless.” I said before that could be sincere. Or another word could be “integrity.”

Recently James Patterson authored a book called “the Day America Told the Truth.” It was a question about America's integrity. The question was – what would you do for \$10,000,000. Here are some of the results.

- 25% said they would leave their church
- 23% said they would prostitute themselves
- 16% would leave America
- 16% would leave their spouses for \$10,000,000
- 10% would let a murderer go free while serving on a jury
- 7% would kill a stranger
- And 3% would even put their children up for adoption
- 2/3rds of those polled said they would do one of the above.

It shows doesn't it, that America needs some integrity. We need integrity.

A dad of one of Eli's baseball teams was telling me about some turmoil on their team a few years ago. A step dad recruited the best players away from his own son's team to start his own. The family hasn't spoken since. As we talked the word integrity came up – that's why it's so important to act with integrity because that's all people will remember about you.

I think God's Word gives us a little different approach. We live on God's holy hill, we live and walk with integrity because that's what people will remember about Jesus and what he has done for us and what means to us. Amen

VVV – Phillip Sievert