

1 Corinthians 13:13

If we were God's people back in the olden days, instead of saying, "Happy Anniversary!" today, we'd be saying, "Happy Jubilee!" Back then every fifty years was a Jubilee Year. All debts were erased; lands were returned to their original owners; and slaves were set free. But perhaps in giving it some thought, it would actually be entirely appropriate today to greet you not just with "Happy 50th!" but with "Happy Jubilee!" Because today we're not just remembering the past fifty years—we're giving thanks to God for what He has done through you and for you in the past fifty years.

Through you He has brought three wonderful children into the world, and through them even more wonderful children. Through you God has enriched your family with a love for their Savior, for His Church, and for His Word and Sacraments. Through you God has served the world around you through the work you did at Dana and at Fox Products. Through you God has served St. John Lutheran Church by using you to serve on boards and committees, and to help build this beautiful sanctuary.

1957 was truly a good year, and not just because of the '57 Chevy; but that was the year God began to enrich the lives of many others—not just through Bob and through Darlene anymore, but through Bob and Darlene Kurtz together—husband and wife; two people joined as one through the bond of marriage.

But the words "Happy Jubilee!" are in order today not just because of what God has done through you, but also because of what He has done for you. The Year of Jubilee meant that all debts were erased. And that is also true today for you. No couple can live one year together, let alone fifty, without having much sin to confess to each other and to God. No marriage is perfect because husbands and wives are not perfect. We all know this. We are all guilty of it. But listen to this: God doesn't just say, "Happy Anniversary!" to you today, He says, "Happy Jubilee!" He erases all your debts. He forgives you. Jesus died for you—all of you. You are set free of your sins against God and each other because Jesus was bound to the cross in your place.

Our bulletin cover quotes 1 Corinthians 13, "The greatest of these is love." Of faith, hope, and love...love is the greatest, because the love of Christ for you brought Him to our world to be born, to live, to die, and to rise again for you. His love for you makes this day a joyful anniversary because the past fifty years were lived in His grace and mercy, and all the rest of your years together are lived in that same forgiveness for you.

Thanks be to God this day for what He has done through you and for you. His great love in Christ Jesus is that which is the basis of our faith and hope. His love has shaped your love for each other. His love for us in Christ is what causes us to say to you today, not just "Happy Anniversary!" but also "Happy Jubilee!" Amen.