

Sunday, October 16, 2022

# Love One Another

(Series: Life, Light and Love; a series on 1 John)

(Message Six)

(1 John 3:11-24)

## Scripture:

*<sup>11</sup>For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. <sup>12</sup>Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. <sup>13</sup>Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup>Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. <sup>16</sup>This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup>Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. <sup>19</sup>This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: <sup>20</sup>If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup>Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God <sup>22</sup>and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. <sup>23</sup>And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. <sup>24</sup>The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

## Message:

**Our world has great difficulty dealing with a righteous person.** A righteous person is a constant reminder of one's unrighteousness, of one's self-focus, and of the fact that one's life is out of sync and a mess. People don't like to be reminded of that fact.

So, Jesus' saints will be insulted, persecuted, and falsely accused (**Matthew 5:11**); when people don't have a case or argument against you, they resort to attacking your character (just watch the political advertisements).

Paul underscores this in **2 Timothy 3:12** – “*Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*” John notes here: “*Don't be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.*” (**3:13**) Literally, from the day Cain killed Abel (**3:12**), the world has been out to get the faithful.

Pro-abortionists mock pro-lifers as *close-minded*, chaste students are labeled as *prudens*, politicians with integrity are belittled as *extreme*; Christians are labeled as bigoted, intolerant, and hypocritical.

Satan *loves* half-hearted, lukewarm Christians who find comfort in not rocking the boat and blending in. John warns us against the Gnostics who intentionally blurred the distinctions between the world and themselves: as long as you think right, how you live is inconsequential. They make Satan's job easier.

If Satan isn't troubling you, there's a reason for it: you don't trouble him.

**When opposition comes, and it will, what is the Christian's solace and recourse?** John encourages us by saying: “*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.*” (**3:14**) John continues to remind us, the evidence of our faith is in our **living** in the **light**, that is, in our **loving**.

**In the first part of this chapter, John called us to sinlessness, now he calls us to love.** Both calls are absolute. Both are beyond our capability; we should be sin free and loving perfectly, but we're not. And as a result, we continue to deal with the tension of not being what we should be.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be different from the world. The world should see that we treat our brothers and sister differently than they treat each other. And we should treat the “world” with love – differently than they treat us.

**The word “love” has been so “overused,” it is usually misused.** This once-honored word has been reduced to cheap sentimentality, self-centeredness, and sex. “*You don't love me if you don't do what I want.*” Love is little more than satisfying our **needs** and **appetites** today.

Nor is love about *liking* someone (even though that is a plus). It is not about how we feel. It is about obedience. Love requires an act of will. It is an intentional decision.

When John uses the term—it's completely inverted from our normal contemporary use. When John talks about love, he's not talking about a warm-fuzzy feeling; he's talking about showing respect and **kindness**, and putting

others' needs and interests above ourselves; he is speaking of **self-denial**, sacrifice, and specific action. As radical (extreme) as this might sound, it's nothing different than what Scripture has always taught and what Jesus Christ modeled when he lived and died for us.

### **NOTE A SURPRISING MEASUREMENT (3:10, 14, 23)**

**How can you know that a person is a Christian?** Do they...go to church regularly? Know and read their Bible? Have they prayed the sinner's prayer? Do they obey the Ten Commandments? Do they believe Jesus is the Son of God? (I've heard all of those; and partially, they all might work.)

But John says you know they're a Christian by whether they love their brothers and sisters in **Christ**. John could have talked about obedience and holiness, or standing for the Truth, or political justice because these Christians were facing horrible persecution. But John passes on that opportunity to talk about love; John understands if we get the "**love**" thing right, the other **things** will all eventually fall into place.

**When our boys were small, we would put pictures they drew on the refrigerator.** Although some of them are pretty good artists today, in those days, you'd never know.

"Dad, look what I drew!" "Wow, that's a great tree." "Dad, that's not a tree" – and the guessing game was on. Regardless of what it turned out to be, Marilyn would take a magnet and put it on the refrigerator.

The picture wasn't placed on the refrigerator because it was of museum quality, but because of the love of the artist for the recipient and the recipients' love for the artist. I imagine God has one huge refrigerator in heaven.

The pictures we *draw* are seldom pretty, often unrecognizable. You've seen my pictures. I've seen yours. But when God places them on his refrigerator, he isn't focused on the pictures; he is looking at the heart of those who "draw" them.

### **Bruce Rawlings compiled a book of letters from kids to their pastors:**

*"Dear Pastor, I know God loves everybody, but I don't think he ever met my sister."*

*"Dear Pastor, I would like to go to heaven someday because I know my big brother won't be there."*

Many people think that those who go to church would love each other, that good people loving good people should be **easy**. Sadly, it's **not**. Linus Van Pelt (in *Peanuts*) says, "I love mankind; it is people I can't stand!" Ray Stedman had a saying: "To dwell above with saints we love, that will be glory; to dwell below with saints we know; well, that's a different story." That is so true.

We're a bunch of lousy artists required by God to learn to love each other. And you may not like me – but John says, I am God's gift to you. I may not like you, but you're God's gift to me. We are family. God calls us to love one another – whether we like them or not.

Our pictures can be really **messed** up; but it is love of the artist for God and God for the artist makes them **beautiful**.

### **NOTE A SURPRISING MODEL (3:16)**

**In 1853, a Belgian Catholic priest was sent to Hawaii to start a leper colony.** Joseph Damien DeVuister went out with high hopes and a great vision. He was there for twelve years. He built a magnificent church. But his hope, his vision, and his compassion slowly ebbed away because no one else seemed to care. His church remained empty.

Standing on the dock waiting to board the ship that would take him home, he noticed some white spots on his hands. He realized he now had leprosy. His only choice was to return to his leper colony. The news spread. Within hours all the lepers knew of his leprosy. They surrounded his hut and reached out to him in compassion and love.

The following Sunday morning he went, as he always did, to the normally empty chapel. But this week, as he turned the corner, he noticed the chapel was packed and a crowd had gathered outside—the preacher finally understood their pain.

**Paul tells a similar story about Jesus:** *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking on the nature of a servant...and became obedient even unto death.” (Philippians 2:5-8)*

Jesus is the perfect model of what real love is all: *“This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” (3:16)*

Many who have read and studied John have been convicted to love more. So how does that work? Obviously, you can't turn it on and off. You can't buy it in a store or order it off the web. There is, in fact, only **one** place to consistently find love. It comes from the **one** who hung on a **cross**, from the one who spread out his arms and said, “I love you this much!”

**In “The Zion Chronicles” by Bodie Thoene, Rachel is a main character.** Rachel was a Jewish girl in a German concentration camp. She stayed alive by being a prostitute exclusively for German S.S. officers. Toward the end of this five-book series, Rachel meets Sari, an Arab girl who was raped and then

discarded by her family. Her brother was about to kill her as required by Islam, but when a group of Jews realized this, they killed him. Now Sari had no one. She is angry. Rachel brings her home.

Sari bowed her head: *“And now what am I? There is nothing left for me.”*

Rachel lifted the girl’s chin, and said, *“You are most loved, Sari.”* *“My family has denied me.”* *“But,”* said Rachel, *“But Jesus, who is merciful, sees you and cares for you so very much.”*

Sari laughs a short and bitter laugh. *“Where was he when my enemies did this thing to me? He cannot love me now. I am defiled. Fit only to live as a prostitute.”*

*“If, then,”* Rachel replied, *“You will not let Jesus love you in your anger, let me try. Will you let your enemy love you, Sari? Then perhaps later we will speak again of Jesus.”*

Sari wiped her nose and lifted her chin defiantly again. *“If you can do this thing, I will not stop you, my enemy.”* Rachel smiled, *“Good! You may call me your enemy, but I will love you all the same and you will see that you are not alone.”*

Rachel found healing and love because she found Messiah. Knowing Messiah, Rachel was able to share His love with others.

We’ve said this before: *You can’t **love** until you’ve been **loved** and then only to the **degree** you’ve been **loved**.* If you’re looking for love, come sit at the **feet** of the Galilean **Rabbi** and just be **still**. Just let him love you and then you’ll have the love you give to others.

### **NOTE THE SURPRISING METHODOLOGY (3:17-18)**

**As we’ve noted, Biblical love isn’t focused on what you **feel**, but on what you **do**.**

A little boy, asked what love was, said, *“It is when Mom reads a book to me, and real love is when she doesn’t skip any pages.”*

I came across a poem (I have no idea who the author is).

*You have needs that I can’t meet; but what I have...I give you.*

*You have plans I can’t complete; but what I have...I give you.*

*I can’t fulfill your fondest themes, or satisfy your dearest schemes, or even comprehend your dreams; but what I have...I give you.*

*Even speaking heart to heart, the two of us seem so far apart; I really don’t know where to start, but what I have...I give you.*

*You have pain that’s all your own, and the pain you carry all alone, and you’ve seen grief I’ve never known, but what I have...I give you.*

*Will you do the same for me, because I have needs like you, you see.*

*So could your words of comfort be, "what I have...I give you."*

**That's what it is really about. That is what love is. Your hurt is to be the wound in my heart, your tears the taste of salt in my mouth.**

So John warns Christians against callousness, of lacking compassion for those who are in distress, who are suffering, who have no hope. In **3:17** John is talking about a brother or sister (in the faith community) with a specific need we're aware of...and our responsibility to help meet that need.

**C.S. Lewis** said, "*Loving everybody in general is not an excuse for loving nobody in particular.*"

We're to **be** like Jesus. **Do** like Jesus. **Love** one another.

### **NOTE THE SURPRISING MITIGATION (3:19-20)**

**Have you ever prayed and felt your heart condemning you?** Maybe it is just me. Consciously coming into the presence of a loving God convicts me that I have failed to love as I should.

- When I've done something good and sensed God's pleasure, I think of all the things I should have done but didn't do.
- If I thank God I could be there for someone; I think of people I wasn't there for.
- If I have done something well, my heart reminds me of the things I haven't done so well.
- If I pray for someone's healing, I wonder why I didn't visit as often as I could have.

The Confessional Prayer of the Scottish Church resonates here: "*Almighty God, I confess I have broken thy commandments. I have sinned by selfishness, worldliness, unbelief and pride. I have not walked humbly with thee nor loved my neighbor as myself.*"

**Understand what John is saying here as he talks about God's love.** He says, "*If you pray and your heart condemns you, God's **love** is greater than your **heart.***"

*"Love in response to righteousness is not love, it is **reward.**"* (repeat) That is, "*Love is not love until it encounters the **unlovely.***"

Marilyn and I had three sons. They are almost perfect – except when they aren't. If they had been perfect, they never would have known how much we loved them because you can't know you're loved until you know you are unlovely. (It is easy, no big deal, to love the loveable.) And they know we love them a lot!

**C.S. Lewis** writes, *“God loves us not because we’re lovely but because He is love.”*

Every major religion except one is based on obedience; Christianity is based on love. If you came to worship this morning feeling guilty, I have good news. You are loved. And you never would have known if you didn’t know you didn’t deserve it.

### **NOTE THE SURPRISING **MANIFESTATION** (3:22-23)**

**We can enter his throne room with “confidence.”** John gives us the **secret** to a powerful and effective **prayer** life. We can talk to God freely and without hesitation, as a child talks to his loving Father.

The secret is not obedience. It is not the length of our prayers. It is not flowery language. It is not regular church attendance. The secret to an effective and powerful prayer life is **love** – love for God and for one another.

If you are not following God’s will—loving him and loving your neighbor—God may not hear your prayers. If you are bitter in your heart toward someone, God may not answer your prayers.

How is your **prayer** life? How is your **love** life? The two are directly **related**.

A pastor on a strict diet walked into his staff meeting with a large coffee cake. As his staff looked puzzled, he said, “Don’t look at me that way, it was God’s will for me to buy this cake.” “What?” one of his associates asked. “As I drove by the bakery this morning, I prayed, ‘God, I’d love a coffee cake. If there is a parking spot open right in front of the bakery, I’ll assume it is your will.’ And...on my eighth time around the block, there was an open space right by the front door.”

When we love cake, we find a way to make it happen. If we love our neighbor, we’ll find a way to meet their needs – starting with prayer. If we love God, we’ll long to spend time with him – in prayer.

God doesn’t meet our needs because we don’t deserve it, he doesn’t meet our needs because we don’t ask. He wants us to ask, so we spend time with him.

Here is a methodology of prayer that can transform your life. When you pray, first tell him you love him and ask him for his **love**. When he gives you that, tell him the rest. Just remember, the only place you get it is from him. You just need to ask.

**Some of you might say this kind of teaching is really dangerous. It is.**

Our society is falling part—lies, abortions, pornography, violence; things are in really bad shape. Christians need to take a stand for what’s right, to be different, to live in holiness and obedience, to live in **righteousness** and **love**!

Daniel Poley writes, *“Hate cannot destroy hate, but love can and does. Not the soft and negative thing that has carried the name and misrepresented the emotion, but love that suffers all things and is kind; love that accepts responsibility, love that marches, love that suffers, love that bleeds and dies for a great cause, and then gets up out of a grave.”*

Teaching about love can be dangerous; living in love will be life threatening; but is also very biblical and very much like Jesus.

And if you don't go **His** way...you **can't** get there from where **you are**.

*Prayer:*

*Father, our world is a mess. It persecutes those who would live godly lives; it hates those who love Jesus.*

*We thank you for your amazing love which reminds us we belong to you, that protects us from the evil of this world, and that provides us with the assurance we have passed from death to life.*

*Most of all, we thank you for Jesus Christ, who does not condemn us but gives us confidence before you that whatever we need and ask for in his name, we will receive.*

*Father, give us the strength to love, not only with our words, but also with our actions; give us the courage to be obedient and live in him as he lives in us.*

*In Jesus' name – our life, light, and love – we pray. Amen.*

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