

11.09.22 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “Loving Others – Not a Choice”

Scripture Reading: [1 John 4:7-21](#)

Reflection: Pastor Henry

When our kids were young, Amy and I tried to give them choices about different things. “Would you like to put your pajamas on first or brush your teeth first before bed?” “Would you like to ride in the grocery cart or walk alongside of it?” “Would you like to pack away your toys now or would you like to pack them up in 5 minutes?” Giving children choices helps them feel like they have some power and control over what they do. By giving choices to our kids, we can also at times, avoid conflicts or tantrums that are the byproduct of being forced to do something they don’t want to do.

In our text for this week, one of the things that caught my eye, my ear, and my heart was 1 John 5:21. This verse has been reverberating within me since Sunday.

In this verse, John writes: ²¹ “And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

What is reverberating within me is the MUST (NIV), the BLUNTness (The Message), of this command in verse 21. We have to love those around us.

When it comes to loving other people around us, John reminds those of us who are disciples of Jesus, that loving others it’s not an option. It’s a must. It’s a “have to.” It is an ought. We don’t get a choice when it comes to loving other people (brothers and sisters – NIV); family members, friends, classmates, co-workers, neighbors, other drivers, etc. Disciples of Jesus must love others. It is what disciples do.

The problem with this “must” is that we as human beings (especially American human beings) don’t like to be told what to do or forced to do something we don’t want to do. We like to have a choice or say in the matter. Non-optional things often rub us the wrong way. However, when it comes to this command to love others that John gives to us who are disciples of Jesus, we don’t have a choice. Loving others is a must.

During his sermon on Sunday, RevEv mentioned the mission tagline on the entry doors at church. Most of you (I hope) are familiar with this Covenant mission statement tagline that is on the doors as you walk in and out of the church building. Those who belong to the Covenant Church community of faith we say are “Captivated by God’s Grace...and Compelled to Love.” These two things define us. The team who discerned this statement a few years ago consciously selected these two words (Captivated & Compelled). The word compelled was selected to get at the “must” and the not-optional characteristics of our need to love others found here in 1 John 4.

John says, “Anyone who loves God MUST also love their brother and sister (those around them).”

What are you doing with the “must” of this command to love others? Are you embracing it? Are you avoiding it?

Are you doing it? Are you fighting it? Are you rebelling against it? Are you throwing a tantrum about it?

Prayer:

Jesus, you first loved us. Thank you for your great love. You command us to love others. Loving others, just as you love, is a must for us. Spirit of God, help us to embrace, rather than fight or ignore or throw a tantrum about, this command each day. In Jesus' name, we pray these things. AMEN.

Action Item for Day/Week:

To whom is the Holy Spirit prompting you to show Christlike love this week? Go do it!

Songs for today:

[We are One in the Spirit](#)

[Love One Another](#)

[Love Each Other](#)

[We are One in the Spirit](#)