

# PM 1 John 3:19-24

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Date: 18 April 2021

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[ 0 : 00 ] A very warm welcome to you all to our services today. Our evening service is at 6pm and I shall again be leading the service then.

Wednesday night, 7pm, we have our prayer meeting and Bible study and that will be led by Norman. Next Lord's Day, 11pm and 6pm, our preacher is the Reverend Ronnie Christie. And now a very welcome announcement. Our morning service next week will be a communion service. First time for a year.

The Lord's Table is for all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Arrangements will be different of course because of Covid.

If you wish to take part next week, then as you enter the church, please pick up a piece of bread wrapped in foil and a small individual cup of wine from the table on the left of the door.

[ 1 : 23 ] Place it on the seat beside you during the service. We will remain in our seats for the taking of the bread and the wine. The bread and the wine will have been prepared hygienically using masks and gloves.

And there will be a retiring offering next week for the Benevolent Fund. Thank you. The word of God says in Psalm 34, I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me. And let us exalt his name together. Let's come together now in prayer. Our gracious God and Father, we do desire to exalt the name of our God. Lord, we desire to praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

[ 2 : 49 ] We acknowledge you at the outset of this service as our creator, our redeemer and our judge. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to die for our sins, to rise again, to be our good shepherd and our king, and to be our saviour.

Lord, we thank you for the Lord. Lord, we thank you for that precious blood of the new covenant that cleanses us from sin. And even at the beginning of this service, we bow to confess before you that we have sinned against you in word and thought and deed.

But we thank you for that we thank you for that we may be feared. And we ask that we might all know the cleansing that comes through the blood of Christ, that we may be able this day to worship you freely, to enter into the holy place, and to rejoice in the presence of our God.

Lord, speak to us through your word, we pray. Help us in our prayers. Help us to enter in, in our hearts, into the singing of your praises.

Grant us, Lord, that we may all know that the Lord is with us, and that we have been with the Lord during the time that we spend together here.

[ 4 : 23 ] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Now our first psalm is Psalm 103.

In Sing Psalms, page 135. And we're going to hear verses 1 to 11. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart.

Let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits. His praise, my soul, in song proclaim. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart.

Let me exalt his holy name. Forget not all his benefits. Forget not all his benefits.

This praise, my soul, in song proclaim. Thank you. Thank you. In the wind!

[ 5 : 33 ] All your sins and wields your sickness and distress. Your might be rescued from the grave and found you in his tenderness.

And found you in his tenderness. He satisfies your deep desires from his unending source of birth. So that just like me he does pay your youthful in earnest renew.

The Lord is known for a righteous man. And justice to the children's father's heart.

The Lord is known for a righteous man. His mighty deeds to Israel's son.  
[ 6 : 48 ] His mighty deeds to Israel's son. The Lord is merciful and kind.

To anger slow and full of grace. He will not constantly reprove.  
For in his anger I exist. He does not love, nature will cease.  
Forgiver sins, their just reward. How great is love as high as hand.  
Towards all those who fear the Lord. Towards all those who fear the Lord.  
[ 7 : 53 ] Now children.

I brought along some pictures to show you today. I don't know how well you can see this. Can you see what that is?  
Or what they are? They are birds, aren't they? They are geese. They are barnacle geese.  
Flying over the top of our house. I have got one or two other pictures of them here. Let's get that the right way up. That's the same geese.  
Or rather more of them. Landing on the merse next to our house. Sorry, you can't see down there, can you? There they are. There they are flying.  
[ 9 : 00 ] Hundreds and hundreds of them. All landing at once. And once they have landed. Here is a third picture of them. There they are. Close up of them.

Down on the merse. Feeding. Remarkable birds. Barnacle geese. And we love watching them.  
We are very privileged. Our house is next to the merse. And we can watch them if we want. All day long. They live normally in the winter.  
Right up in the Arctic. Up in an island called Svalbard. 1,500 miles away. And when it gets too cold for them.

In the winter. They make their way south. And they come all the way down here to Scotland.  
Scotland. Other people think Scotland's cold. But barnacle geese think this is the tropics.  
[ 10 : 05 ] It's really warm down in Scotland. So they come here. And they stay here roughly from October through to April. They'll be flying away in the next week or two.

I should think. I love watching them. And one of the things that often strikes me about them. is how they seem to do everything together.  
In that first picture. There they all are. Flying together. That's a remarkable thing to do. They're only a matter of a wingspan apart from each other.  
And yet they never bump into each other. At least I've never seen it happen. And that's very difficult to do. It reminds Jane and I of the Red Arrows.  
They're an aircraft display team in Lincolnshire. And they used to fly over our house in Lincoln. And they'd be only just a wingspan apart.

[ 11 : 14 ] And they didn't touch each other. And it took tremendous training to do that. Our son-in-law is a pilot. And he would tell you it's almost impossible to fly a plane like this.

That close. Safely. But they manage. And they fly together. All those hundreds of miles. From the Arctic. And then.

They feed together. Let's have that picture again of them feeding. There they all are. Each one's got its own little bit of space. But they're all together.

And they munch away at that grass. All day long. And if any danger arises. Or if it just gets to the end of the day.

Well. They all fly away together. They're arriving there. But it looks much the same when they fly away. They do seem to have a leader.

[ 12 : 18 ] We've never worked out which bird is the leader. But any danger that comes along. A dog comes walking along. And suddenly. Squawk, squawk, squawk.

They're all up on their legs. And away they fly. All at once. Just like this. Now. In some respects. That reminds me. Of Christians. You see. As Christians. We are all.  
One family. And we do things. Together. We do have a leader. And we do know who the leader is. You know who the leader is. Don't you? The leader. The leader. The leader. The leader. The leader. The leader. The leader. Is Jesus Christ. And whatever he says. We do. We could say that as Christians.

[ 13 : 19 ] We fly together. We live the Christian life together. As a church. As a church. As a church. And we feed together.

That's what we're doing today. When we gather together in the church like this. We've come here to feed. Obviously not on grass. But on the word of God.

God. Later on in our service. We're going to be looking at a passage in the Bible. Where it tells us to love one another.

Well I don't know whether geese love one another. But they certainly like to be together. And it should be the same for us.

Christians love to be together. Let's sing again. Or at least let's hear the singing of a psalm.

[14:20] And our second psalm is 148. In Sing Psalms. That's on page 194. I chose this psalm particularly because of verse 15.

10 where it speaks of birds. And it says there small creatures. Birds. Exalt his name. The portion that we have.

That we can play. Unfortunately it doesn't include that. It's just verses 11 to 14. But that's also very relevant to us. Because it speaks there of everyone.

Young and old. Praising God together. All nations and earth's kings. Princes and all who reign. Young men and maidens too.

Both children and old men. The Lord's great name by them be praised. His name alone on high is raised.

[15:25] The Lord's great name by them. All nations and earth's kings. All nations and earth's kings. Princes and all who reign.

Young men and maidens too. Both children and old men. The Lord's great name by them be praised.

In my heavenly praise. The Lord's great name by them. The Lord's great name by them. The Lord's great name by them. The Lord's great name by them.

The Lord's great name by them. The Lord's great name by them. The Lord's great name by them.

The Lord's great name by them. And Jesus is on hope.

A mighty king has given. Let Israel give praise to God, they are his people, praise the Lord.

[16:43] Well, let's hear together now the Word of God. And we're going to have two readings from his Word.

The first is from Genesis chapter 4, and the first 16 verses. Well known story of Cain and Abel.

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have produced a man with the help of the Lord.

And again she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a worker of the ground.

In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock, and of their fat portions.

[17:53] And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

The Lord said to Cain, why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, and you must rule over it.

Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel, your brother? He said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, what have you done?

[18:57] The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth. Cain said to the Lord, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.

Then the Lord said to him, not so. If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.

And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

And now our second reading is from 1 John, chapter 3.

[ 20 : 14 ] Those of you with good memories will know that last year, when we were meeting, whenever I was preaching on the Sunday, we were going through 1 John.

We had got as far as 1 John, chapter 3 and verse 11, and I'm going to read down to verse 18. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

[ 21 : 25 ] By this we know, love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

But if anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and truth. Let's bow together now in prayer. Our gracious God and Father, we do thank you for your word. We thank you that we can feed upon it.

We thank you particularly for the Lord's day, when we can do so, as it were, in a leisurely way, without the pressures of work upon us. We thank you for the Lord's day, when we can set aside this time to feed together in the word of God.

[ 22 : 36 ] And we pray that your word might do us good. We thank you for those things of which we have read. And particularly for that great love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us.

And we pray that you will help us to understand how we may follow in that exalted example. That though we cannot lay down our lives for one another's sins, yet we can live for one another.

And we pray that you will help us to do so. Even in this little congregation, may we be known for our love. Amen. We pray for the churches of God throughout the land this day.

That you would help your people everywhere to worship you. And to study your word. Help those who preach your word everywhere. That they may do so with the anointing of God upon them.

And that there may be souls saved throughout our land today. And that the saints may be built up in their most holy faith. We pray, Heavenly Father, for the royal family at this time.

[ 24 : 03 ] Lord, we thank you for the life of the Duke of Edinburgh. But we pray now for the Queen and for all her family in this time of mourning.

Especially for the Queen. We know that just after a funeral, often that is the darkest time. Lord, we know that she will be surrounded by many people and will have many duties.

And we know her to be a woman of duty. We thank you that we understand her to be a woman of faith. And we pray that she may find comfort and support in the Lord Jesus Christ at this time.

We pray for the nation. Lord, many will have watched that funeral yesterday. Sadly, no preaching of the word.

And yet there was the reading of the word. And there was the singing of a psalm. Lord, we pray that these elements of the service may sink down into people's hearts.

[ 25 : 17 ] That they may ponder the great issues of life and death. We've just heard sung how princes should praise the Lord.

And even princes must one day die. And we also must one day die. There is no discharge in that war. Lord, prepare every one of us for the day when we will come before the face of our maker.

We pray, Lord, for the government of this country, both in Westminster and in Edinburgh. And we ask you, Lord, to give them wisdom, to protect them, to keep them from all the foolishness of worldly legislation.

Direct their hearts into the fear of God. Grant that there might be your reviving grace in our land. That the Spirit of God would come and stir up people from their spiritual sleep, from their spiritual death.

Lord, raise the dead, we pray. And grant that people might come to faith and to life through the Lord Jesus. May there be many who pass from death into life and begin to love the brethren.

[ 26 : 37 ] We commit ourselves to you in our own more personal needs. You know each one of us. You know the circumstances we're in.

You know the illnesses that wear us down. You know the anxieties that fill us with care. You know also, Lord, the desire of the hearts of many of us here to serve the Lord day by day. Help us to walk in the ways of righteousness for your name's sake. Grant us, Lord God, that we may indeed resist sin.

We've read how Cain was told that he must resist sin. He must overcome it. And he didn't. Help us to overcome sin.

And help us to walk in love. As Christ loved us and gave himself for us. Hear us in these prayers. For we ask all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 27 : 44 ] Amen. Now before we look at the word of God, we're going to hear Psalm 133 on page 175.

Psalm 133. How excellent a thing it is. How pleasant and how good. When brothers dwell in unity. And live as brothers should.

How excellent a thing it is.

How blessed a thing it is. How blessed a thing it is. How blessed a thing it is. And live as brothers should. When brothers should. When brothers dwell in unity.

And live as brothers should. thirds that have come. How blessed a thing it is.

[ 28 : 51 ] For when whatever you trying to possession. But they dwell in unity. What we hope not. O boy, you are a verse. The country isn't ours. How blessed a thing it is. The world that is known. The world that is worthy of life Time to see.

O'er the house on earth's head, the land running over from His ear, upon His Father's head.

Like heaven's view upon the hill, also by our living stands.

The glory to His blessing bear, the life that never ends.

O'er the house on earth's head, the land running over from His Father's head.

[ 30 : 30 ] O'er the house on earth's head, the land running over from His Father.

The church in His day, in very vivid terms, how they came together for prayer as if about to storm heaven.

And how they prayed for the emperor and for the peace of the empire. And how they read the scriptures and heard sermons.

And how money was collected for the poor. For burying the dead. For providing for orphans.

For supporting the elderly. For helping the shipwrecked. And for those in prison or condemned to work in the salt mines.

[ 31 : 48 ] And then he says how the people were amazed at how different Christians were from the world.

A very famous passage, Tertullian writes. See how these Christians love one another, they say.

How they are ready even to die for one another.

Well that's exactly what we read about here in this passage. It was actually true in Tertullian's day. I wonder if it's true of us in our day.

We've been studying 1 John on and off for some time now. And we've seen how the grand theme of 1 John is real Christianity.

In contrast with the false Christianity that was spreading in those days. Well here is another mark of real Christianity.

[ 33 : 08 ] Real Christians love one another. I want us to consider today first the principle in verse 11.

And then the practical outworking in verses 12 to 18. How we should not be like Cain who took his brother's life.

But like Christ who laid down his life for us. What I have to say this morning is very simple and straightforward.

The only question is whether we will live up to it. So first then the principle that we should love one another.

Verse 11. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning. That we should love one another. John has raised this subject before.

[ 34 : 13 ] In chapter 2 he spoke of the commandment to love one another. And he drew the same contrast between love and hatred.

In chapter 2 verse 9. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light.

Now he raises it again. He has actually introduced it in verse 10 with another black and white contrast. By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God. Nor is the one who does not love his brother. Now he is developing that thought.

John is taking us back as he does so often to the beginning. To first principles.

[ 35 : 20 ] To the teaching of Christ. We live in a world that is constantly seeking something new. But the teaching of Christ never changes.

John is thinking no doubt as he so often does of the last supper. In John 13 and verse 34.

A new commandment I give to you that you love one another. Just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples.

If you have love for one another. And again in John 15 verse 12. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

Jesus told his disciples to teach whatever he had commanded them. Well that is exactly what John is doing here. This is sometimes known as the 11th commandment.

[ 36 : 31 ] There is a story about the great 17th century Scottish preacher Samuel Rutherford. An apocryphal story maybe but quite believable.

The story goes that one day the great Archbishop James Usher was travelling through Scotland incognito.

And he wanted to attend one of Rutherford's services but without being noticed. So in disguise he went to his house and asked if he could stay overnight.

And Rutherford of course welcomed the stranger in. But Rutherford's wife wanted to know how much this stranger understood.

So she asked him how many commandments are there? And when he answered 11. She concluded that he was an ignorant man.

[ 37 : 31 ] But in the morning Rutherford overheard him praying. And he was obviously a godly man.

And he overheard him in prayer speaking of Christ's new commandment. And then Rutherford understood what he meant. He quickly discovered who he was.

And they had good fellowship together. The focus here is upon loving one another.

Notice. Our fellow Christians. Our brothers and sisters in Christ. Elsewhere in the Bible we are taught to love our neighbour more generally.

And that of course is very important. Jesus says that to love God and to love our neighbour as ourself is the whole of the law.

[ 38 : 35 ] But here we are taught in particular to love one another. But what does that mean? Let's look now at the practical outworking.

And that contrast between Cain and Christ. First on the negative side in verse 12.

We should not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brothers righteous.

You all know the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. It's a tragic comment on our fallen nature.

That the first murder occurs right at the beginning of human history. Adam and Eve I'm sure were thrilled when their first child was born.

[ 39 : 39 ] And what hopes they must have had for him. I wonder if they even wondered. Is this the promised seed? Who will rescue us from our sin?

And then wonder of wonders. Another child was born. How excited they must have been.

And then it all turned sour. The two boys grew up. Cain became a farmer. Abel became a shepherd. Both honourable professions. But then Cain brought an offering to God. From the fruits of the earth.

And Abel brought the firstborn of his flock.

And the Lord accepted Abel's offering. And not Cain's. He definitely wasn't the promised seed.

[ 40 : 43 ] Why God accepted Abel's offering. And not Cain's. We're not actually told. Some think it was because God required a blood sacrifice.

Others think it was simply that Cain lacked faith. But either way. Cain was angry. He was jealous.

That his younger brother was accepted. Rather than him. That he hated him for it. It's a scene.

Sadly acted out in many households. Sibling rivalry. And a seething resentment. Those of you with young children.

Pray. That that kind of sibling hatred. Never arises. Among your children. It happens. In many families today.

[ 41 : 48 ] But on this occasion. It had a tragic outcome. Out in the field one day. Cain murdered his brother. And when God asked.

Where is your brother? He callously replied. Am I my brother's keeper? And he was cast out. From the presence of God.

And condemned. To wander the earth. And the earth would no longer bring forth its fruit for him. Now Cain.

John says. Was a child. Of the devil. Not literally of course. He was a child of Eve. But spiritually. He was behaving. Like the devil. As Jesus said. The devil. Was a murderer. From the beginning. Now this.

[ 42 : 45 ] Murder. Tragically. Sets the pattern. For the future. The ungodly. Will always hate. The godly. John says.

In verse 13. Do not be surprised brothers. That the world. Hates you. They are jealous. Of the favour. That we have with God.

They feel condemned. Perhaps. In comparison. With us. And that. Can turn. To violence. It did with Jesus.

They hated him. And they murdered him. And it can happen. To us. Jesus said. If they hated me. They will hate you.

Also. It happened. In Tertullian's day. Much as the world. Admired. The Christians. They still persecuted them.

[ 43 : 43 ] It will happen. In our day. Also. We are. Not. To be like Cain. Hating our brother. Hatred. Belongs. To Satan. It belongs. To the world. Of darkness. And death. And we have been. Delivered. Out of that world.

We have been. Born again. We are a new creation. We have been. Called out of darkness. Into God's glorious light. And hatred.

Has been replaced. By love. Indeed. This is the proof. That we are Christians. Verse 14. We know. That we have passed. From death. Into life. Because. We love the brothers. We have no proof. Otherwise. Love. Is the proof.

[ 44 : 39 ] We didn't love. Love. The brothers. Before. We were saved. We probably. Didn't love anyone.

Very much. Our own family. Perhaps. Our friends. But certainly. Not the people of God. God. If we thought about them at all.

We hated them. And we despised them. But now. We love them. And that love. Is the proof. That we have been. Born. Again. The opposite.

Is also true. Whoever. Does not love. Abides in death. Everyone. Who hates his brother. Is a murderer. And you know. That no murderer. Has eternal life.

Abiding in him. That's not to say. That a murderer. Can't be saved. But a saved man. Can't commit murder. And hatred.

[ 45 : 36 ] Is really. Murder. In the heart. As Jesus says. In Matthew 5. 21. You have heard. That it was said. To those of old. You shall not murder. And whoever murders.

Shall be liable. To the judgment. But I say to you. That everyone. Who is angry. With his brother. Will be liable. To judgment. Whoever insults. His brother. Will be liable.

To the council. And whoever says. You fool. Will be liable. To the hell. Of fire. Now this surely. Is a challenge. To us. If John. Had merely said. Don't murder. Your brother. Well. That would be easy. Wouldn't it? That really. Would be setting.

The bar low. But no. He traces it back. To the heart. Don't be angry. With your brother. Don't hate your brother.

[ 46 : 32 ] Too often. There has been. Hatred. Among Christians. And sometimes. Even persecution. We look.

For faults. In other Christians. We write them off. As heretics. For the slightest. Of differences. We resent.

Churches. That are more. Successful. Than ours. As James says. My brethren. These things. Ought not.

To be so. It's with some. Relief. That we turn. To the positive side. That we should. Be like Christ. Verse 16. By this. We know love. That he. Laid down. His life. For us. And we. Ought to. Lay down.

[ 47 : 28 ] Our lives. For the brethren. It's striking. To compare that. With another. Chapter 3.

Verse 16. John 3. 16. Speaks of. The love. Of God. In sending. His son. Giving up. His son. For us. For God. So loved. The world. That he gave. His only begotten son. One. John 3. 16. Speaks of.

The love. Of the son. In giving himself. Up. For us. There can be no. Greater.

Love. Than this. Christ. Dying for us. On the cross. Here is the. Greatest. Dying for the least.

[ 48 : 23 ] Here is the best. Dying. For the worst. And doing so. Willingly. Out of love. The Bible.

Speaks. Repeatedly. Of this. And rightly so. This is the greatest. Wonder. That the world. Has ever seen. Just to take.

A few examples. Jesus says. In John 10. I am the good shepherd. I. Lay down. My life. For the sheep. And in John 15.

Greater love. Has no one. Than this. That a man. Lay down. His life. For his friends. Paul says. Romans 5. Verse 8. God shows his love.

For us. In that while. We were still. Sinners. Christ. Died for us. Galatians 2. Verse 20.

[ 49 : 18 ] You sense. Paul's amazement. At this thought. The son of God. Loved me. And gave himself. For me.

Ephesians 5. 2. Christ loved us. And gave himself. Up for us. Ephesians 5. 25. Christ loved the church.

And gave himself. Up for her. John himself. Says later. Chapter 4. And verse 10. In this is love. Not that we have loved God.

But that he loved us. And sent his son. To be the propitiation. For our sins. And in Revelation 1. And verse 5. To him who loves us.

And has freed us. From our sins. Be glory. And dominion. Forever. Forever. The contrast.

[ 50 : 15 ] With Cain. Is striking. Whereas. Cain. Took the life. Of another. Christ. Gave his life. For us. Cain.

Hated. One. Better than himself. Christ. Loved. Those. Infinitely. Worse. Than himself. Cain.

Hated. The godly. Christ. Loved. The ungodly. Cain. Saw. Abel. Favored. By God.

And he hated him. For it. Christ. Saw us. Condemned. By God. And he pitied us. And had mercy. And offered himself. For us.

In Genesis 4. God said. That the blood. Of Abel. Cried out. To the ground. God. In Hebrews 12. It says. That the blood.

[ 51 : 14 ] Of Christ. Speaks. Better things. Than that. Of Abel. It speaks. Of love. It speaks. Of sacrifice. It speaks.

Of eternal life. For sinners. Like us. The point. Here though. Is that we should.

Imitate. Christ. We. We. Ought. To lay down. Our lives. For the brothers. As the children.

Of God. We should. Show the family likeness. God. Is. Love. Therefore. We. His children. Should also.

Show love. Christ. The son of God. Loved us. And gave himself. For us. And therefore. We. His people.

[ 52 : 08 ] Should follow. That example. And ourselves. Lay down. Our lives. For the brethren. Not that we can die. For anyone's sin.

Of course. Psalm 49. Says. No man. Can ransom. Another. But we can. Show. Sacrificial. Self-giving. Christ-like. Love.

In extreme. Circumstances. That could involve. Dying for them. There was a Roman soldier. In the third century. Called. Alban. Who sheltered a priest. From persecution. And he was so impressed. With the priest's calmness.

In the face of death. That he himself. Became a Christian. When his fellow soldiers. Came to arrest the priest. Alban put on the priest's cloak.

[ 53 : 05 ] And took his place. And died. Instead of him. So that he could escape. Such things do happen.

Not just in history. They happen still. Occasionally today. More commonly though. We're called to show love. In lesser ways.

By sharing our wealth. Perhaps. Or by sharing our time. Christian love. Is intensely practical.

Christ's love. Was practical.

Wasn't it? Dying for us. Our love. Should be practical too. Jesus gives some examples. In Matthew 25. In the parable. Of the sheep.

And the goats. I was hungry. And you gave me food. I was thirsty. And you gave me a drink. I was a stranger. And you welcomed me in. I was naked.

[ 53 : 59 ] And you clothed me. I was sick. And you visited me. I was in prison. And you came to me. And when they ask. When? He replies.

As you did it. To one of the least. Of these my brothers. You did it to me. James speaks. Of visiting the widows. And the orphans.

For the past year. We haven't been allowed. To visit anyone. Have we? I hope you found that. An inconvenience.

I hope you found it. Something difficult. That you couldn't visit people. You should. Because we are. As Christians. Called.

To care. And part of that. Does involve. Visiting one another. Let me repeat. That our love. Is not. To be restricted.

[ 54 : 53 ] To Christians. But Christians. Should have a place. A very special place. In our hearts. Because they are family. family. Paul says.

In Galatians 6. As we have opportunity. Let us do good. To everyone. But especially. To those. Who are of the household.

Of faith. This is the mark. Of the real Christian. And the lack of it. Casts doubt. On whether we are Christians.

John says. In verse 17. If anyone has this world's good. And sees his brother in need. Yet closes his heart. Against him. How does the love of God. Abide in him. It's a rhetorical question.

He doesn't expect. An answer. A hard hearted attitude. Towards others. Suggests that the love of God. Is not in us. If that is you.

[ 55 : 55 ] Then you need. A new heart. In other words. You need to be saved. John ends. John ends. With a very simple exhortation.

In verse 18. Little children. Let us not love in word or talk. But in deed. And truth. Note again. The practical emphasis. It's not enough to say.

We love one another. Not enough to talk about it. Not enough to agree. That we ought to love one another. We need to show that love.

Opening our hearts to others. And not closing them. In short. Our love must be real. Like the love of Christ. Christ didn't just say.

That he loved us. He did something about it. He came down from heaven. And he died for us. And that. Is the example. We must follow.

[ 56 : 52 ] So as we draw to a close. Let me go back to that quote. From Tertullian. And ask. Can the world say.

About us. See how those Christians. Love one another. The world. Often gets a bad impression. Of the church. They hear about our divisions. And sadly. There are plenty of them. Especially here in Scotland. They hear about the scandals.

And how the press. Loves to write about scandals. In the church. And many people. Never even. Venture. Into a church.

But if they do come. What will they find? Churches that grow. Are usually. Churches. That are full. Of love.

[ 57 : 55 ] That is often. What first. Attracts people. In a world. Full of hatred. And hard heartedness. How good it is. To find people.

Who care. About each other. And about the world. I know. That when I first met. genuine Christians. 48 years ago. It was seeing. The love. That they had. For one another. That first. Convinced me.

That I ought. To consider.

The gospel. I'm sure. That we do. Love one another. But there's always. Room for improvement.

We need to attend.

To both sides. Of this. On the negative side. We need to search. Our hearts. For hidden. Hatred. And ask.

[ 58 : 51 ] God. To help us. To drive it out. As Paul says. In Ephesians. Let all. Bitterness. Wrath. And anger. And clamor. And slander.

Be put away. From you. With all malice. All of it. Christians. Rightly. Resisted. The government's. Proposed. Hate crime bill. Because it. Threatened freedom. But no one. In their right mind. Wants to encourage. Hatred.

