

Love One Another

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[0:00] Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.

! Let us pray. Gracious God and most merciful Father,! You have granted us the rich and precious jewel of Your Holy Word. Assist us with Your Spirit, that the same Word may be written in our hearts to our everlasting comfort.

To reform us. To renew us according to Your own image. To build us up and edify us into the perfect dwelling place of Your Christ.

Sanctifying and increasing in us all heavenly virtues. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. So we continue this morning in our series in the book of 1 John.

And I want you to remember that from last week, in John chapter 3 verse 9, John talked of two kinds of people. Do you remember? Those who are children of God, and those who are children of the devil.

[1:13] Those born of the devil practice lawlessness. Just as their father, the devil, is lawless. And those who are of the children of God, do not make a practice of sinning.

Because God's seed abides in them. So in other words, they have God's DNA in them. The family trait that makes them hate sin, that submits under God's rule, that exhibits godly sorrow over sin, which leads to repentance.

That's God's DNA. Summed up by John in verse 10. He summed it up as practicing righteousness. And he adds this defining trait to it.

The sons, the children of God, practice righteousness, and they love the brothers. John puts it negatively, actually, in verse 10.

Whoever does not practice righteousness, or love his brother, is not a child of God. And in verse 11 to 24, John builds on that second clause of loving the brother.

[2:32] He builds on it at some length. And shows us that genuine love for fellow Christians is another way of telling who are of God, those who are of God, and those who are not.

Remember that John is writing to a church that is separated by falsehood and heresy. He's writing to a church in which some of them claim to know God, but they've departed from the apostolic teaching.

They've departed from obedience to God's word. And in the midst of this confusion and uncertainty, John is concerned with helping the church identify who the true believers are.

And what he says in this letter is not a new thing. It's a fundamental, even foundational truth about what it means to be a Christian.

Love. John wants us to see that love is the defining characteristic of a true believer. If you remember, I said in our introductory sermon to this series in John, when we began it, that John comes back to the same themes over and over again.

[3:56] You know, reading the book of, the letters of John, it's like climbing a spiral staircase. Remember that analogy? And then at each level, you see the truths that John is exposing and expounding on.

You see it from different and deeper vantage points as you climb up that spiral staircase. And that's what's going on here because John has been talking about love since the beginning.

John wants us to get love right. He dwells on it consistently in all his writings, so much so that he is known as the apostle of love. I think it's because the preeminent virtue that marks one as a Christian is this virtue of love.

Or this characteristic, should we put it. The greatest of the three Christian graces, faith, hope, and love, the greatest is love.

It is the one that never ends, Paul tells us. In 1 Corinthians. It is the one trait in which all other Christian virtue and gifts must operate in.

[5:11] Without love, all your other Christian virtues, all your other Christian gifts are useless. Paul says it.

If I don't have love, I am just a clanging cymbal, a nuisance. Without love, everything we do is futile and has no eternal value.

This is the truth. Not according to me. This is the truth according to the Holy Scripture. And when you get home, I encourage you, not now, but when you get home, I encourage you to read 1 Corinthians 13.

Now, Paul continues, John rather, continues in this letter in verse 11. He says, Based on this, for this is the message that you've heard from the beginning.

Verse 11. This is the message that you've heard from the beginning. That we should love one another from the beginning. What he means by that is that since you've heard the gospel proclaimed to you, you've heard that love is an essential characteristic of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

[6:30] So far in this letter, John has been talking a lot about love. Explicitly, he's been talking about love for God and he's been talking about love and the way we show love for God according to John is by obeying his word.

Obedience to him is a sign of our love for God. And he's implied that that love also will lead to love of others. But this is the first time in this letter and he'll repeat it six more times as we go on.

But this is the first time where he says explicitly in a command, we should love one another. He says, this is how we know who the children of God are.

They love one another. In fact, look further in verse 14. Love for your brothers and sisters in Christ is a sure assurance that you are born again.

It says in verse 14, we know that we have passed out of death into life because, how do we know? Because we love the brothers. whoever does not love abides in death.

[7:42] The passage of death to abundant life with God is shown by the fruit of love. And that's how indispensable love is in the Christian life.

This is the real Christian DNA. Without this trait, you are not in the family of God. Do you see how serious a matter this is?

John is trying to tell us that a church or Christian without this defining characteristic, without this defining trait, is a dead church.

Is a dead Christian. They're just mere Christians in name only. Earlier, he called such people hypocrites. meaning that they're like actors with masks on their faces.

They're not authentic. This is a sober and solemn word here. Holy Trinity, I pray that you will grasp the gravity of Apostle John's message here.

[8:50] That all we do, all we do, if not done in love for God and for the people of God, is futile and empty religion.

We're just mere play acting. Meaningless and purposeless. We're devoid of the life-giving resurrection power of God if we do not have love towards one another.

Whoever does not love remains in death. love and John is specifically talking here when he's speaking of love, he's talking about devotion to your fellow believer.

Devotion to God and devotion to your fellow believer, to those who are members of the family of God. He goes on to give, he gives a negative example to show what not loving looks like in order to show what the real thing is.

And what's the example he gives? That of Cain and Abel. Look there in verse 12. Do not be like Cain, who was of, that means he belonged to, the evil one.

[10:02] And he murdered his brother. You know the story from Genesis 4. Cain is the first child born into the world, to Adam and Eve.

Abel is brother. Next, and the first child, this is the, this is out, the falliness of man, precipitous and ruin as it was.

The first child born becomes a murderer. Cain murders his brother Abel. Their story shows what lack of love can lead to.

And it's not, you know, we think of murderers, we think, man, vile, contemptuous, evil person. But, I was listening to a lawyer speak of having to defend murderers, and he says, what's scary about

murderers is how ordinary they are.

Because, what leads to murder? It's very human emotions. Anger, first anger, contempt, and then actual murder.

[11:12] murderers, and remember Jesus' words in Matthew 5, in the Sermon on the Mount, that shall ring in our hearts and in our ears. Jesus says, there are many ways to murder.

Whoever is angry without cause, harbors hate in his heart towards his brother, has already committed murder. The root is the same, that's what Jesus is trying to show us.

Commonplace things like anger, like resentment, like jealousy, like injured pride, or feeling slighted, or disrespected.

All feelings that I've had, I don't know about you, at one time or the other, all these feelings lead to hate, and then can lead to physical murder, in Cain's case, or, according to Jesus, in many other ways we can murder our brother in our heart.

In many other ways in which hatred surfaces in our hearts, it surfaces through slander, or gossip, twisting the truth to destroy someone's reputation, or spreading unflattering information.

[12:29] It matters not if it's true or not. Spreading it to achieve the same end. Doing this we murder in our hearts. And John's verdict is this, such actions are not actions of someone who has love for his or a fellow brother or sister.

Such actions, when they persist, when those actions mark our lives and our behaviors, those actions show that we are not born of God.

Let's look closer at the story of Cain a bit. What does he do? He murders his brother and Hebrews 11 tells us why. Hebrews 11 verse 4 says, Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain by faith. That's a key word. Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain by faith. Don't skip over that bit. By faith. It is by faith that Abel's sacrifice was approved.

It was by faith that he was approved as a righteous man before God. Whereas Cain's sacrifice was rejected by God. The Bible does not make any comments about the quality of their offerings, actually.

[13:48] Do you know that? That in Genesis or any other New Testament exposition of it. The Bible doesn't tell us, oh, Abel has a nicer offering, it was more beautiful. No, the Bible doesn't make any comments about that.

Rather, it was a disposition of their hearts that God weighed in accepting their sacrifice. Abel's sacrifice was accepted because of his faith.

We see that in Genesis 4, 6-7, after Cain's sacrifice had been rejected. The Lord himself, the Lord is loving and merciful and long-suffering.

The Lord himself came to Cain and said to him, why are you so furious? If you do what is right, when you hear that word, if you do what is right, think, from our last week's thing, if you practice righteousness, as we discussed last week, if you're not a man of lawlessness, if you do what is right, God tells Cain, won't you be accepted?

But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Cain desires to enslave you. Cain did not have the faith of his brother.

[15:06] And instead of crying out to God, that he may receive the gift of faith, what does he do? Instead, he hardened his heart towards resentment and hatred, and ultimately to killing his brother because of his brother's faith.

Cain, John tells us, is of the evil one. And John is saying, don't be like Cain. Cain is of the evil one, as is, the faithless world is of the evil one.

John has already shown us that the world is in rebelling against God's rule. The world is in rebelling against God's reign, and the world are sons, meaning all of them, sons and daughters of the devil. This is why in verse 13 he says to us, John says to us, do not be surprised that the world hates you. Don't be surprised. It's there right from the beginning.

Cain hates evil. It's there throughout the Bible. The world hates the people of God. And it's there supremely in the person who is actually the offspring, Jesus Christ.

[16:19] It's an ancient conflict. God told us of this conflict. In Genesis 3.15, the seed of the serpent has always been and will always be at enmity with the seed that is the offspring of the woman.

The seed of the woman, the offspring of the woman is the Messiah himself, Jesus Christ. And all those who identify with Jesus will practice righteousness, will bear the essential family DNA.

Hear this. if you bear the essential family DNA, the world will hate you. So don't be surprised at the world's hatred. I think often the churches are baffled and anxious and surprised and scared when we see oppositions from the world.

And in some sense it is frightening, it is scary, because it bears upon us. Persecution, it is a real thing. Jesus has told us, and John is telling us here, it shouldn't surprise us.

They hated our Lord in the same manner. But the world, this is what's also true, the world and all those that are in the world are passing away.

[17 : 38] So every murderer who hates his brother, there is no eternal life abiding in such a person. they will pass away with the perishing world.

This is the negative example that John is saying. Do not be like Cain. We must not harbor in our hearts hatred towards a brother or a sister if we seek to love God.

But then John also gives us a positive example, doesn't he? Look there in verse 16. By this, this is the positive example, by this we know love, that he, who is he?

Jesus Christ himself. He laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our life for the brothers.

For the brothers. Every time you hear brothers here, think brethren, think brothers and sisters.

He's not excluding, he's not limiting it to just one gender here. love. So, this is the positive example.

Jesus Christ is that positive example. By this we know what love is.

[18 : 49] Look to Jesus. He laid down his life for the brothers, for us. And so we ought to do the same. Now, we get to, we get at this point, we get to the nature of this love that John is talking about.

It's an active love, isn't it? It's not a passive, said by, kumbaya, good thoughts and good wishes kind of love. It's an active love.

It is the active love of God's people that they ought to have towards God and they ought to have towards God's people and they even ought to act towards the world that hates us.

We ought to have that sort of active love. And there is no better example than Jesus Christ. He perfectly and supremely showed us in his life and in his atoning death what this love looks like.

I love how John proves to be a true disciple of his master. Because what John says in chapter 3 verse 16 here is just a restatement of Jesus' own very words in John 15 verse 12 to 14.

[19 : 55] Jesus says this in John 15, this is my command, love one another as I have loved you.

No one has greater love than this to lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends Jesus says if you do what I command you. Jesus remembers his master, John remembers his master's words.

That's why he says in John 16 by this we know, we know what love looks like. Jesus Christ will lay down his life for us. John does not mean here when he says that we should do the same, lay down the life for our brothers.

It doesn't mean that we are to die or think that our death for our brothers will save them. No, there's only one death once and for all, one sacrifice that brings salvation, that brings people from death to eternal life.

That is Jesus' sacrificial once for all death. But he gets practical though. He shows us many ways in which we can actually lay down our lives for one another.

[21 : 00] Die, die to itself so that we can serve one another. He gives us examples in verse 17. If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need, yet closes his heart against him.

That means with old compassion, with old love. That's what it means to close your heart. And he says, if anyone does this, how does God's love reside in such a person?

to close your heart to the need of your brother or sister, when you have this world's goods, that means you have the means to help.

It's the world's goods. You have the means to help, but to close your heart to them when their time of need is to show that you don't actually have the love of God abiding in you. John is very practical with his examples here.

And there's one awful commentary that suggests that he might have in mind, when he gives this example, he has in mind God's command in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 15, God himself says this to his people, the children of Israel.

[22 : 05] He says this in verse 7 to 9, if there is a poor person among you, God says in Deuteronomy, one of your brothers within any of your city gates, in the land your God has given you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your brother.

brother. This is God in the Old Testament. Instead, you are to do what? To open your hand to him and freely loan him enough for whatever need he has.

And there's the warning that comes in verse 9, be careful that there isn't this wicked thought in your heart. The seventh year, the year of canceling debts is near, and you are stingy towards your brother and you give him nothing.

He will cry out to the Lord against you and you will be guilty. That is God telling Israel how to treat their fellow countrymen, their brother and sisters.

The seventh year, Jesus, God, knows our heart. He says here in verse 9, be careful that there isn't this wicked thought in your heart that the seventh year, what is the seventh year?

[23:22] The seventh year is the year of jubilee, and God has prescribed that on the seventh year, all debts are canceled. So you might imagine if your brother comes six months to the year and says, I have this great need, dire need, and you start to do the math in your head.

If I loan this person this money, he's not going to pay me back before the year of jubilee. I'm not going to be able to recoup all my money, so I better not.

Sorry, I can't help you. It's the pragmatic thing to do, isn't it? It's the prudent thing to do. But here, how does God describe such pragmatic thinking, such prudent thinking?

It says, wicked thoughts, is how God described it. Don't have this wicked thought in your heart. love it. Like Christ, brothers and sisters, we are called to love sacrificially.

Sacrificially. And what does it look like to love sacrificially? It means laying down our lives, giving up our resources, of our earthly goods, of our time, of our talents, to one another in the household of God.

[24:38] verse 18, John says, little children, let us not love in word or speech.

Don't let your love just be mere words, but love in action and in truth. Loving in action and in truth means being generous in showing love.

Being practical, even. Being practical in meeting one another's needs. You know, in that Deuteronomy passage that I read earlier, God goes on to say that there will never cease to be poor people in the land.

And God says, that's why I command you to open your hand willingly to your poor and needy brother, because you will always have the poor among you. So God gave this command to Israel to set them apart from the countries around them, so that their love towards one another, their generosity towards one another, will be seen by the nations around them and they will say, wow, what kind of God do these people serve?

Who are they? Who is their God? Look at the way they treat one another. And that's the exact thing that Jesus wants us in the church to also act like, so that our love for one another will tell a story, a gospel, a true gospel story to the world around us.

[26:03] that's why God's command to the churches for the same reason. It is our love which bears testament to the world and to ourselves that we are God's children.

But when we hate, when we abhor resentment towards one another in the church, what are we doing? We're telling a lie about the God we claim to love. We're bearing false witness about the God we claim to follow to the world out there.

We are falsely representing him to the world. And Jesus said this of his followers, by this, remember, Jesus says it, by this all people will know that you are my disciples.

How? If you have love for one another, would that the church of Christ be more faithful in obeying our Lord's command in this area?

That we will love action and truth, willingly opening our hands and our hearts to one another. Would that we will be?

[27:14] Reflect Christ's DNA in that. John goes on in verse 19 to 22, and as you read verse 19 to 22, it seems like a digression from the rest of John's argument in these verses.

But I don't think it is, and I want you to pay close attention here because what John is doing in these verses is trying to encourage us, comfort us, and assure our hearts. He says in verse 19, by this, by this you will know that you are of the truth, that we are of the truth, and reassure our heart before him, that is before God.

For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. John gives us words of assurance in these verses.

It may not readily seem so, but what John is saying is this is how we know we are of the truth. We are truly in the family of God, that we are children of God. We can be persuaded that we are truly of the family of God, when, if you are tempted to think pragmatically about the cost, and you weigh the balances of what it means to help your brother or sister in need, you like that Israel saying, well, the UNF Jubilee is coming, this person, if I help them, I'm not going to get the money back, or when you think to yourself, well, I'm not even going to get a thank you for this.

This person is not even going to appreciate my sacrifice, and it is a sacrifice, but the person is not going to appreciate it, or what I'm doing for this brother or what I'm doing for this church is going unappreciated by everybody.

[29 : 07] It's not worth it. I'm going to not do it. When you think that way, that is your heart condemning you.

That's what John is saying here. When you think that way, your heart is condemning you. If you have Christian DNA, if you have God's DNA in you, you then should recognize that and be convicted.

John then says, it's actually to reassure us. When I was reading this passage, this I think was one of the most convicting verses for me in my preparation this week.

I know in my heart how often I do the math. I do the arithmetic. What's arithmetic? Is it worth it? Is it worth all the trouble of helping this person or giving myself in the sacrificial way?

And then I groan and moan about having to love my brother or sister. And if we're honest, we all do the math at one time or the other in our hearts. But here is what John is saying to us.

[30 : 15] Whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart and he knows everything. You, it's not up to you to know the end from the beginning.

It's not up to you to do the arithmetic. It's up to you to love sacrificially. That's what John is saying to us. God is greater than our hearts. In other words, when the temptation to do the math appears in your heart and arises, when your heart condemns you by failing to live up to Christ's example of sacrificial love, remember brothers and sisters, God is greater than your heart and he knows everything.

He knows your weaknesses and he knows mine. He knows your human frailty that keeps you from loving like him and he is greater than that weakness that you might have.

His love and his compassion is greater than your human weakness and your human meanness. He's greater than your closeness of heart.

So, the invitation then is to trust him and not your heart at those moments. Trust him. He has a greater heart.

[31 : 40] Trust his heart. Trust his generosity. And ask him that he will give you the compassion, his compassionate heart in those moments.

And then walk in obedience. Sacrificially love one another. Sacrificially give of yourself to your brother and sister. Open your hand willingly to your needy brother or sister.

And as you do so, as you do so, verse 22, whatever we ask, we receive from him because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

That's the promise. Whatever we ask, we receive. When we practice this kind of sacrificial love, this generous love that resembles God's love, we can have the assurance that we are indeed his children and we can have the confidence to approach him in prayer.

And John concludes by telling us that this love is not something we can create or manufacture in our human strength. But if we believe in his name, this is the comforting word, this is continued assurance that John has given us.

[32 : 54] If we believe in his name, we cannot love this way in our own strength, in our own power. But if we believe in his name, if we place our faith in Jesus Christ, if we trust in him, we will naturally grow more like Christ.

It will be natural. We will grow like Christ. The two go hand in hand. Faith in Christ allows us to love as he commanded. And you know what is going to happen?

Many times in your life, the accuser of the brethren will come. Who is the accuser of the brethren? Satan. He will whisper his lies in your ears and tell you, you're phony.

You're not a real Christian. I know how you struggle to love. I know how you can't help but think of yourself before others. He will come. He will tell you those lies.

He will try to tell you you don't belong to the family of God. And sometimes he will have evidence to show of your failures. But this is the antidote, dear friends.

[34:04] the antidote is believe in the name of Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It is not your perfect works. It is not your perfectly loving that saves you, that makes you part of the family of God.

It is actually God's perfect, lavish, gracious, merciful love towards you that makes you part of the family of God. And so when the devil comes, when he comes with his accusations, tell him, look to Jesus Christ.

In this season of Lent, as you aspire and you strive to draw closer to God, do not rely on your strength.

Rely on the finished saving work of your Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the word. Believe in him. Trust in him. Believe in his name.

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God abides in him. And by this, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, by this we know that he abides in us, by the spirit whom he has given us.

[35:21] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen. listen, be un and that is a man to lip to to to,, lip lip o do lip lip lip lip lip or or You