

1 John 4:19

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[0:00] That we have all the kiddos with us today, and I would actually like if all the kids could come up here with me, because I'd like to talk to you a little bit.

You're not. Yeah, come on. Come on, come on, come on. Yeah, there are some seats up here. You can sit on the floor, whatever you guys need. You're going to sit next to me? Okay. And you can bring a helper with you or a friend, whatever you need, and I would love to talk to you guys. Every wave. Hi. All right. You're just so stinking cute, I couldn't not do it. I am so glad you guys are here today. Do you know why?

Why? Because I want to tell you a secret. All right. Do you want to hear a secret? Yeah. All right. I'm going to tell you one. I'm going to tell you one in just a minute, okay?

Last week, while you guys were learning about Rahab and how she helped God's people, your parents and I started thinking about sin and temptation.

[1:36] Do you know what sin is? Yes. What sin? Disobeying your parents. Disobeying God. Yep. And what is temptation?

It's when you want to disobey. And here's the problem. Yeah, yeah. Ooh. And here's the problem. We do want to disobey God sometimes, don't we?

So if we're going to change, if we're going to stop disobeying, we need first to want different things. And that's hard, isn't it, to want different things?

You want what you want, right? So, last week, your parents and I looked up. Way up.

Can you guys look up? We didn't look up. We didn't quite look up that way. We looked up. We considered some stories from the Bible.

[2:38] You'll see. We considered some stories from the Bible where God showed how high and lifted up and majestic and glorious he is.

And each time people saw how high and lifted up and glorious God is, they wanted to change. They couldn't believe how awesome God is and they wanted to be just like him. They stopped wanting to sin. That's right.

Okay. So, last week, we looked up. Way up high. Can you guess where we're going to look today? Huh?

To the moon? To God? Last week, we looked way up. This week, we're going to look? Way down. Ah, I tricked you. We're going to look inside.

[3:35] Can you guys look inside yourselves? Oh, sorry. Sorry. I'm going to put on wires on this thing. Wait. Am I still on?

Okay. Yeah. All right. So, how did we do looking inside ourselves? It's tough, isn't it? One of the truths that the Bible teaches us is about looking inside ourselves.

Because the Bible teaches us that we do what we do because of what's inside us. When you run up and hug your mommy or your daddy, why do you do that?

Because we love them. Exactly. You're thinking about how much you love them, and that love is inside you. But, yes.

But when you stomp your feet and shout no at your mommy and daddy, why do you do that?

Because we're... And that's inside us, too.

[4:42] Right? We're not thinking then. We're not thinking about how much we love them. We're thinking much more about how we love getting our own way. And that is inside us, too.

And Jesus says that everyone is like that. You and me, your parents, your friends, the president, astronauts, scuba divers, everyone.

We all act in love or in selfishness. And that comes from the inside, from what we want. And, guys, we're getting close to the secret.

Now, let's remember together, okay? Don't shout out your answers, but let's remember. Each of us, let's remember. The last time you did something that you knew was wrong.

Whether it was unkind or untrue or unloving. Do you have it in your head? Keep thinking.

[5:47] Keep thinking. Keep thinking. Okay. Keep remembering. And let's look inside. Whatever that sin was, you did it because you wanted something.

You wanted to get your own way. You wanted to get that thing. You wanted to make sure you were first or you wanted something else. And what's missing there?

Love. Love for God and for other people. Every time that we sin, it's because on the inside, we're thinking about us first, not about loving others.

And the secret's almost here, right? We do things. The why. Why we do things is about what's going on inside us.

If we're thinking about love, we give hugs. If we're thinking about ourselves, we stop our feet and shout no. And so we need to be thinking about love. But that's hard.

[6:46] How do I make myself feel loving all the time? That's interesting. There's a different secret though.

Okay. There's a different secret. And the secret is, it's not. Thanks. The secret is, it's not all up to you.

You don't have to be the one who works up your own love all the time. Why not? It's because the Bible says, I think we might have a verse come up here in a minute.

It says, we love because he first loved us. Jesus loves us.

He loved us first. He loved us long before we even knew his name or were even born. Let me say that again to you guys. Jesus loves you.

[7:44] He loved you first. That's right. He loved you long before you ever knew his name. And let's look inside one more time.

Does that make you feel loved? Does that make you feel special? Does it make you feel happy? You don't have to come up with all your own loving feelings all day long so that you can act in a loving way.

The secret is that. He loved you first. Let that make you happy and you'll be filled with love. And you'll find yourselves wanting to act in love.

So friends, let's remember to look inside. Right? We give hugs when we're loving. We stop and shout when we aren't.

The secret to act in love. The secret to acting in love is remembering how much he loves you. And to help you remember how much he loves you.

[8:50] When you guys head back to your seats and you can do that now. You're going to get a coloring sheet with this verse on it. So thanks guys for coming up here.

You guys can head back and start on your coloring sheets. They're being handed out now. And while you guys do that, I'm going to talk to your grown-ups a little more.

Do you see her mommy?

Do you see mommy? There we go. All right. So friends, as the kiddos color, let's reflect on that same idea ourselves.

Parents, I hope there's a lesson for you, a parenting lesson for you right there. When your child is acting in disobedience, in defiance, if you've already had a conversation with them about these things, perhaps on the drive home today, you can ask them, what are you thinking about?

[10:09] Who are you thinking about right now? And that might be the trigger to help them reset and reflect and switch the desire that they're living out of.

But this isn't chiefly about other people. It's first about us and our own hearts. As we saw last week, Jesus said in Luke chapter 6, the good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good. And the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil. For out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth speaks. We think and speak and act and live out of the heart.

Our words, our deeds, our lives are a reflection of our hearts. And so we don't just ask our kids, what are you thinking about?

What are you focusing on? What are you driving towards right now? We ask ourselves. And so let me ask you this same question.

[11:18] The same questions I ask the kids. Let's remember together. Don't shout out your answers. Let's remember together. The last time you did something you knew was wrong.

Whether it was unkind or untrue or unloving. Do you have it in your head? And so let's look inside. Whatever sin it was, you did it because you wanted something. You wanted to get your way. Or you wanted to get that thing. You wanted to make sure that you were first. We think, we speak, we act, we live out of the heart. Which is why it is so important to foster, to nurture, to cultivate love in our hearts.

A loving life springs from a heart of love. And why go all the way to love? Why is it not enough to just cut off sinful desires? Stop the selfishness instead?

[12:25] It's because we're not capable of just cutting off desire without a lobotomy. Like, there's no neutral ground in the human heart.

There's no place in between where we aren't filled with love for something. You will love something. Humans can't help it. And it better be the right thing.

Because Nazis acted out of love for something. American slave owners and Planned Parenthood and Vladimir Putin. Everyone is acting out of love for something.

There is no middle ground. And certainly most loves that aren't Christ, right, they aren't going to produce such outrageous results as Nazis. But even our love for something that is small or something that is even good, right, something as acceptable as comfort.

Comfort's a good thing. Can cause us to act in smaller but still sinful anger towards the people around us in our words and in our deeds.

[13:43] Right, perhaps that sinful thing that you just called to mind was born out of a love for control or comfort or respect or order or rest.

Right, the list goes on. None of those things is inherently wrong, are they? God made us, he gave us a day of rest. But if my heart is fixated on it and you interrupt it, you will feel my wrath because I have made an idol in my heart.

What we need are hearts filled to overflowing with the right kind of love, with our hearts set on the right object. And while it might seem simplistic when we spoke to the kids about that, like we have to face the same reality, it is hard to drum up an outward, overflowing love all day long.

Isn't it? Which is why we return to today's verse. We love because he first loved us.

In the first half of the 1800s, a Scottish pastor named Thomas Chalmers preached a sermon called The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.

[15:11] That's quite a mouthful. Here's what it means. If we want to expel, get rid of, those loves in our lives that lead to sin, we need to drive them out with a new affection, a new love.

There's no other way. And the Christian way into that is not to simply rely on our own strength, our own strength of love, our own determination to love, our own ability to foster love in our own hearts.

The Christian way to renewed affection for God is dependence on God. We love because he first loved us. we love God not because we're so great and have realized how great he is.

Not because we're so wise and loving and affectionate that we muster up some love for him. He draws it out of us. We love because we look to Christ and behold in him a love like no other and our hearts are drawn to him.

a love that preceded ours, that generates ours. Because to see him is to see love to the uttermost.

[16:34] Last week we saw to see him in his majesty convicts us of sin. today to see him in his love produces love in return which drives out those loves which cause us to sin and so let us look at him in his love.

His love pursues. We love because he first loved us. He came for us. it does not wait for us to earn anything as if we could as if we ever will.

He first loved us and came. Before we were trying to walk in holiness he loved us. Before we ever tried to honor his name he loved us.

Before we became his children also by his grace and love he loved us. before we ever turned from our sinful path.

Before we stopped being his enemies he loved us. God so loved the world that he sent his son. [17:54] The love of our king his love pursues. And it is a humble love not a prideful one. He came not as a conqueror though he could have.

He came in tenderness and kindness saying come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. He came not demanding for love does not demand its own way.

He came offering giving. He is the fount of blessing and graciously lovingly joyfully bestows blessing on his people.

love and his love is humble because it drew him the Lord of glory who we saw last week to condescend to a peasant's birth to an itinerant's life and to a traitor's death all for us.

[19:19] his love is humble. Not only that it is sacrificial. Need I explain it? I don't need to but I want to and we ought to desire to look in again and again to the sacrificial love of our King in order to rescue us from our sins and from our death he came and innocently died in our place.

What sacrifice! And rose from the grave on the third day so that all who would call on his name who would repent and believe on him might be saved freely and forever all by his grace he has a sacrificial love for his people such that he could say I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

As love pursues and is humble and is sacrificial it is generous. Ephesians chapter 1 Paul reflected on that thinking blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Last fall we spent some time considering the discipline of Christian contentment. the greatest part of our contentment exists in the fact that in Christ we have all things.

There is nothing that he will withhold from us in the coming ages and indeed he is the great reward and he has offered himself for us and to us as our great portion.

[21:34] everything that billionnaires own is dust but we will possess the fountain forever.

His love is generous. And so our goal friends is to keep our eyes set on him because if we put in front of the eyes of our hearts lesser things that we are after my comfort my respect my control whatever it is and we live out of that we will always end up trampling other people ruining our relationships dishonoring God that's what sin is and does it's okay to want comfort but not more than God and so we need to keep looking at his love so that we see day in and day out what kind of love it is this love that first loved us and our love will well up in return we love because he first loved us if we see constantly before our eyes that he first loved us that will be the thing that changes our hearts day by day by day that we might honor him in the lives we lead and that's my prayer for you and for me and for his whole church that the love of for

God would drive out drown out love for self and sin so that you and I walk less and less in the ways of the world and the flesh so that we want to do that less as one writer put it his love is the incentive the motive and moral cause of our own we cannot but love so good a God we cannot help but love so good a God who was first in the act and work of love who loved us when we were both unloving and unlovely who loved us at so great a rate who has been seeking and soliciting our love at the expense of his son's blood and is condescended to beseech us to be reconciled unto him let heaven and earth stand amazed at such love his love is the productive cause of ours so let us be a church marked by reminders continual reminders of

God's love in the gospel of Jesus Christ remind yourself daily of the love of Christ make that a spiritual discipline of yours remind your family daily of the love of Christ pray to him daily thanking him for his pursuing love read from his word and see his humble love spend time with other Christians and marvel at his generous love together as we conclude today receive from the covenant meal Lord's supper the testimony from your Lord visibly tangibly of his sacrificial love and so we turn our attention now to this meal that he gave to his people it's the meal the seal of the new covenant and so for all who have repented and believed and trusted on

Christ this is his testimony to you and what testimony is it it is the testimony of his sacrificial love and so if we keep this before our eyes week in and week out we will be again and again and again reminding ourselves keeping the love of Christ central in our hearts and growing away from sin and towards lives of righteousness sin and so as they were And so as they were eating,

[27:00] Jesus took bread and after blessing it, broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat. This is my body.

Let us recall together the humble, pursuing, loving, generous love of our Savior. And he took a cup. When he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, Drink of it, all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Let us drink, proclaiming his death and recalling his sacrificial love for his people. O Lord our God, your word says that the love displayed in the gospel is something that the angels long to look into. Heaven and earth stand amazed at the outflowing, humble, generous, sacrificial love displayed on the cross.

[28:50] May we stand amazed at your love so that we love in response and may that drive out all those things in our lives.

Words and deeds, thoughts and desires that dishonor you, that put a wedge between our ongoing fellowship with you.

And Lord, make us a people more and more like Christ, not just externally, but at the center of our being as we behold his love.

To him be honor and glory in our lives, in the church, and in all the world, forever.

Amen. Amen. End.