

First John (12) - Hatred And Love In Conflict

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[0 : 00] Now, will you turn with me, please, to the passage we read in 1 John, chapter 3, and tonight looking at verses 11 to 18.

For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Now, the door to the passage is opened, really, in the previous verse, whereas we finished last time, we just noted in just conclusion that, as he's concluding that part of, has three ties there on righteousness, whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother, and then that feeds nicely into this passage, verses 11 to 19.

And that's really an expansion of verses 7 to 11 of chapter 2. And then if you cast your mind back, Beloved, I am writing no new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment. And so on, he goes on and talks about love and hatred in the same passage. So what we've seen, really, is that 1 John is comprised of these various assessments, or tests, you might call them, where you find these three great issues dealt with.

[1 : 29] First of all, the issue of what we believe. Secondly, the issue of how we behave. And thirdly, the issue of relationships, especially in terms of loving one another.

And as you come to this second treatment of loving one another, you'll find that it's taken you a bit higher than the previous one. And he mentioned it, as we saw in chapter 2 there, but now he's building on that.

He's adding some more layers to that in terms of what it means to love one another. And he does so especially in this assessment by emphasizing that this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, similar to what you find in chapter 2.

In other words, as he's dealing with the heretics of his time that are actually proposing such new teaching to the church, that have gone out from them, as we saw earlier, and have left the company of these believers.

They've gone out and taken this new teaching. But John is emphasizing this is the message that you have heard from the beginning. In other words, the heretics were trying to attract attention and attract support by emphasizing, look, this is something really new.

[2 : 38] This is something that we commend to you as having that quality about it that is not old like the things that the apostles actually taught you or the Old Testament taught you.

This is new. And that's what heresy always does. It always presents itself in the guise of something new. Where it challenges the gospel and the core of the gospel especially, it always presents itself as if it's something entirely new, although you know, of course, that there is no such thing as new in the sense of absolutely new.

Every heresy that's ever been has had some version or other of it from the beginning of time. And you'll find here the emphasis that John is giving is this is the message that you've heard from the beginning.

In other words, he's really, again, pointing to them that their safety is in the very foundational things that they were taught by the apostle himself and his fellow apostles and right back into the Old Testament as well.

But that age, that apostolic age, as it set the New Testament truth for us is something that you again and again and again go back to whenever you find something presented to you as new.

[3 : 50] You compare it to this. You compare it to the doctrines of the New Testament, the doctrines of the gospel as they've been passed down through the generations. And the Lord presents itself as new.

Heresy is not actually new, but of course, one of its dangerous aspects is that it seems to be new and therefore leads you into error and astray and away from Christ and the safety that you find in him.

But as you look at this, there's a very interesting structure to this passage because it gives you, for the one, on one thing. It gives you the figure of Cain as the representative of evil, although it says there of false teaching and of murder and of sin and of hatred especially, although it says that he's of the evil one, that's the devil, where all of that originates, of course.

But it's interesting how the structure of the passage compares Cain and Jesus, although the name of Jesus isn't mentioned. That's obviously who's meant by what he says in verse 16, this love that he laid down his life for us.

That's obviously Jesus. So what you find is that at the head, if you like, of hatred is the figure of Cain. The opposite to that and the counter to that at the head of love is the figure of Christ.

[5 : 17] So you've got both of these very interesting features of the passage, but it doesn't end with that because while that is true, that's then worked out in various connections. The connection of hatred to killing because hatred always sets out to kill others and we'll see that's not necessarily true physically and actually, but it is always true in a moral or spiritual sense that wherever hatred exists, wherever hatred is perpetrated, it seeks the doing away of the person that's hated or it seeks the removal of the person that's hated.

Deep down, that's the nature of hatred. And what he's saying is that's actually characteristic of the world. He says, don't be surprised if the world hates you.

The figure, representative figure of Cain, he murdered his brother. That's, he says, the nature of hatred. It always sets out to assassinate, whether it's in character or in person.

And that's what you find, he says, in the world. Now for John, as we've seen more than once, the world in John means that body of humanity that is arranged deliberately in hostility to God.

That's not a mild thing. It's not a neutral thing. It's actually that opposition to God, to the gospel, to the truth of God. That's what he means by the world.

[6 : 48] As we saw earlier in verse 15 of chapter 2, do not love the world. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, pride and possessions.

That's not from the Father, but is of the world. In other words, he says, that's what you find. That's what the world is characterized by. And a feature of that is it's hatred.

So there's Cain, and there's the fact that hatred, as represented in Cain, sets out to kill. That's the spirit of the world, and it ends in that, at the end of that chain is in the killing of others.

Now with love, the connections go in the opposite direction. Because love is something, instead of killing others, it sets out to kill self.

You want to actually kill the things the Bible calls the elements of self. Pride, arrogance, self-superiority, self-righteousness.

[7 : 55] All the things that characterize self. When you love God, when you seek to love your fellow human beings, and especially in the love of Christians, love is actually aimed at killing self, not killing others, as hatred is.

And that's represented, that's what something which characterizes rather, the life of Christians. As he puts it here, just as hatred is a characteristic of the world, in enmity against God, so love is to be a characteristic of Christians.

And a characteristic that has, as its representative ahead, Jesus himself. That's briefly the structure of the passage. We've spent a bit of time on that, but it does help if we can actually just work out the structure of the passage, and where it's going with the main features of it, so that as you go through it, you can see, well, yes, that's exactly what is actually happening here.

But one other thing before we come in detail to look at these two, and that is that there's an obvious and ongoing conflict between these two elements of hatred and love.

Hated and love can never be reconciled. The only way you can stop hating is to begin loving. You cannot reconcile the two.

[9 : 16] And it's a fallacy to think that somehow or other, the hatred of the world to the gospel can actually be somehow mitigated or lessened or even stopped by just toning down the emphases of the gospel on such things as sin and God and his judgment and God in those aspects of his character where you see him in relation to sin, where certain sins are specified in the Bible.

It's a fallacy to think that the way to actually win the world is just to pretend that the gospel is other than it is. Because that hostility is a hostility that God himself emphasizes that can never be overcome except by the world ceasing to be what it is.

There's that hostility of hatred to the gospel, to God, to the people of God. And that hostility, that antagonism, that enmity, that difference, that major difference, will always characterize the relationship of what is the world to what is God's people and God himself.

So let's look at more detail. First of all, the hatred of the world related to that of Cain. And secondly, the love of Christians modeled on that of Jesus.

The hatred of the world related to that of Cain. And the love of Christians modeled on that of Jesus. Now you see he's saying, for this is the message you've heard, that we should love one another.

[10:53] We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one. And that's especially poignant and especially solemn, that hatred has its roots in the devil.

It doesn't mean we blame the devil when we find human hatred exercised against other human beings. But that's where it has its origin. Cain was of that evil one and murdered his brother.

And of course, John is really just recalling, in referring to the devil in that way, he's just recalling the teaching of Jesus. You go to John chapter 8, the gospel of John chapter 8, that's one of the ways in which Jesus described the devil.

Chapter 8 verse 44, He was a murderer from the beginning. That is the character of the devil. That's what the devil is or is like.

He is a murderer. He sets out to kill. He wants tonight, actually, to get you and I to turn away from the truth of God so that our souls will be lost, so that we will be lost, so that we will be actually found at last in God's judgment, subject to death or under the everlasting power of death.

[12:04] The devil wants to kill you. The devil wants you to lose life and not to have eternal life. That's what he's set upon. That's what his nature is.

Please don't listen to any caricatures of the devil that you find when people tell you he's just a figment of human imagination, something that's been invented by the church over the years, as religious consciousness grew, as people might put it.

The devil is who he is described in the Bible. Jesus knew who the devil was. Jesus met him. Jesus overcame him. He's a very real being with malevolent design on your life.

And when Cain murdered his brother, Cain was showing himself to be of the evil one, of the devil. Why did he actually murder his brother? Well, we're told there, and it's an interesting reference, he murdered his brother.

Why did he murder him? John asked the question, and he answered, because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. And there's more to that than just looking at his brother as being different to himself.

[13:22] What is this actually saying to us? He murdered his brother because he was intensely jealous of him. He was jealous of the fact that God had accepted his brother and not himself.

Instead of looking as God had said to him to do what was good and then he would be accepted, he went out instead and took his brother's life. He removed this object of his hatred.

He exercised his hatred. He was jealous of the fact that God had accepted his brother. He was jealous of his heart. Or something that led to the murder of his brother. And that shows you, at the heart of hatred is that desire just to get one over or even to do away with the person you're hating. Now, that's one thing. You and I have to stop over that tonight and realize that's the nature of jealousy. That's the nature of enmity. That's the nature of envy.

In Mark chapter 15 and verse 10 we find an interesting comment that Jesus was actually delivered when Pilate actually came and actually spoke better than the authorities of the time themselves acted.

[14:35] But Pilate, here in Mark chapter 15 and verse 10, when he's dealing with Jesus, when he took him out and set him before the people, the rulers especially, he said, Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?

Isn't that interesting? It was out of envy that the chief priests delivered Jesus over to Pilate and brought these accusations against him.

They couldn't stand him because he was better than themselves. They couldn't find any fault with him, so they were envious at that fact. That's what envy is like.

That's what jealousy is like. Beware of jealousy. Beware of envy. Beware of that spirit in your own soul. And as I look at my own soul as well, that's what put Jesus across to be bound and eventually to be crucified.

The envy of those who couldn't stand what he represented. See, that's what envy is like. It doesn't just resent other people for having certain things that we don't have ourselves.

[15 : 50] Envy is something that resents what is known as better than what we have ourselves. Envy can't stand someone or something that's ahead of the person that's envious.

Watch out for envy. It kills. It kills. It damages. It damages. It sets out to eradicate. It sets out to remove other people.

That's what it's like. It's an assassin. And you see, this is what is being said as characteristic of the world. My brothers, he says, don't be surprised that the world hates you.

We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. Of course, this is Jesus. This is John again thinking of the teaching of Jesus. John 15.

If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own.

[16 : 57] But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you. A servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. That's very telling.

And it fits in exactly, of course, with what John is telling us here in this passage we've got before us tonight. Because the person they're really getting to is Jesus in the life of his people.

Be sure of this. The more that the world sees Jesus in you, the more it's going to dislike it. The more it sees of Jesus in your life, the more you're going to be hated on account of that.

It's not so much you that's hated. It's the person that you're following. It's the Jesus that you're worshipping. It's the image of Jesus in you. Get away from the idea that somehow or other the world is all of a sudden going to like you.

[17 : 56] And if you actually hide what you represent, if you hide what you believe in, if you don't really come fully to follow the Lord and think that that's actually going to pacify the world, you're mistaken.

Because even the slightest element of Christ in you is going to attract the notice of the world. And of course it doesn't necessarily mean that the world is going to literally put people to death because of what they believe.

Friends, tonight it happens. There are some here tonight who know that better than I know it because they serve agencies that actually go into different parts of the world to actually bring help to persecuted Christians.

In 2019 alone, over a thousand Christians were murdered in Nigeria.

That's just one nation. That's just where statistics can be gathered to a reasonable extent or to a fairly accurate extent. People are being put to death tonight as you and I meet in comfort here in this church building as we come together without fear of being oppressed for what we believe, at least not to a great extent.

[19 : 15] Without fear of somebody coming in here and causing mayhem and murder simply because they actually don't like and hate the Christ that we worship. But there are people tonight who are being killed for that.

Friends, let's remember that as we so often tend not to because it doesn't affect us directly ourselves. But tonight, please remember the persecuted church.

People who are being killed and families who have lost loved ones simply because they've been true to Christ. That's what hatred does. That's what hatred of Jesus is like.

That's what it reaches out to do. But then, of course, it doesn't have to be literal killing. Hatred kills in terms of thoughts and actions and words.

As you know very well, words can be very wounding. Words can be very damaging. People's reputation can be shredded just because words are used and cannot then be retracted.

[20 : 15] People believe them. All you need to do is go on to social media. It's full of hatred. It's not all hatred, but it's full of hatred all the same.

And if you check social media, you'll very, very soon discover that it's crammed full of verbal assassins. And especially who want to assassinate Christian character and the Christian gospel

and Christian people's reputation.

That's what envy does. That's what hatred does. That's what John was facing. That's what he was calling these Christians to think about and to deal with.

That's why he's saying, we should not be like Cain, who actually murdered his brother. We should not be like them.

It's the opposite that we should be to love one another. So that's the first point. It's the hatred of the world related to that of Cain, who is of the evil one.

[21 : 21] And the world's hatred is against what is like Christ, or where Christ is revealed in his people. So tonight, if, as I hope you're a Christian, if you're afraid of raising up your voice, we're living in a world where this is becoming increasingly difficult, think about what Jesus did, as we'll see in a moment, for the security of his people.

He laid down his life for us. If you're a Christian and you still haven't made it known, well, that's a denial of Jesus, isn't it? It's something that you want to rectify, something that you want to put right, because that world out there needs your Christian witness, needs the light of Christ to be seen and shining into its darkness.

Please don't leave that unprofessed, unshown. Here is John saying, let's not be like Cain, but let's love one another and let that love show, because the representative of that love is Christ.

So that's the second thing. The love of Christians is modeled on that of Jesus. Now, verse 14 is very interesting. 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. We've dealt with the way in which love is, everyone who hates is a murderer, in the sense of, particularly in the sense of character assassination, or seeking to destroy reputations, and so on.

[23 : 16] What John is saying here is, this love is actually evidence of being saved. And the we, as you see there in the translation, it comes out very well, the very first word there in verse 14.

We know that we have passed out of death into life. As if John is saying, and he is really saying this, what I'm saying is, of the world is actually true. The world is characterized by hatred. The world is characterized by that hatred, which seeks to kill others, and kill reputations, and do damage. But we, emphasizing the contrast, you see, we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

The world hates, but we love. You see, becoming a Christian, coming to know the Lord, is really a rescue, isn't it? God rescues us, and he says here, we have passed from death to life.

We've been taken out of death, and into life. How do we know that? Where is the evidence of that? Well, one of the main sources of evidence, one of the main things that you have as evidence, is that you love your fellow Christians.

[24 : 28] That you love the people of God. That's what he's saying. He's saying, we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

How can that be? How can he be so sure that loving Christians, or Christians loving one another, is indeed an indication, or an evidence, that we have passed from death to life?

That's what he's saying. Well, remember, of course, that in those days, as indeed to this day, in certain parts of the world, to love your fellow Christians, means to put yourself right in the firing line. It wasn't easy to be a Christian in John's day. It wasn't easy to be a Christian under Roman persecutions. It's not easy to be a Christian in places like Pakistan, or Iran, or wherever else people are Christian today, under repressive regimes.

You tie yourself to Christians. You actually try and worship, even in a private house, and you'll see that authorities will soon actually take you into prison, and in many cases, will even put you to death as an example.

[25 : 38] In other words, it's not anything less than putting yourself in real danger. And yet, this is what they were doing. We know, that we have passed out of death, and into life, because we love the brothers.

We're not just keeping it hidden. We're showing our love to them. We're practically showing, as you'll see in a minute, our love to them. You put in yourself, you love your brethren, that's your family.

It means brothers and sisters, of course, in the Lord. It's very specific. Remember what was said of Moses, in Hebrews chapter 11, that great list of people who live by faith, Moses amongst them.

And in verse 24, by faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter. Now, you see, when he's saying, when he was grown up, it really is making absolutely crystal clear, Moses knew exactly what he was doing.

He was a mature man. This wasn't something that was, he was just following something else, his parents or whoever. When he was come to maturity, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather, choosing instead to be mistreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin.

[26 : 57] He considered the reproach of Christ, greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith, he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

You see what that is saying about Moses. He deliberately chose affliction with God's people. He chose to be known as part of these people of God, who in Egypt were treated as slaves, who were downtrodden, who were belittled by the Egyptians, persecuted.

Moses said, I belong to these people, and I want it to be known that I belong to these people. And I want to make it clear that I am not an Egyptian, that I belong to the people of God.

And by faith, that is what he did. You see, he is saying, we know we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

How would you know that Moses was a believer? Well, he could have put on different clothes, he could have done a lot of things, that might have somehow, had a semblance of evidence, that he had indeed, that he wasn't indeed an Egyptian.

[28 : 14] It was clear that he wasn't an Egyptian, because he visibly joined himself, to these people of God, to know that he had passed from death to life.

And he was one of these covenant people of God. And so tonight, too, take courage, and take encouragement, if you love God's people.

If you love them sincerely, none of us might say, we love them as much as we would want to love them. None of us might be able to say, we love them to the extent we would like.

But if you love them, and if you love them for what they are, and if you love them despite things you still see in them, despite their imperfections, if you still see Christ in them, and know their love for you, and you love them in return, that's an evidence that you've passed from death to life.

Take that as an indication, that you're in a right relationship with God, when that love is sincere, and genuine, and you're not afraid to show it. That's what he's saying, the love of Christians modeled on that of Jesus.

[29 : 29] But then that brings us to that point, where Jesus himself is referred to, in verse 16, by this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

But if anyone has this world's good, 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 in truth.

Well that's pretty obvious, isn't it? That he's saying, love is not just evidence of being saved, but love is concerned to give, rather than to receive. Concerned to give, rather than to receive.

Because, the prime example there, of love is Jesus, just as the prime example of hatred is Cain.

And he says, we know love, by this, that he laid down his life for us.

And we ought, to lay down our lives, for the brothers, for the people of God, for our fellow believers.

Now it may not, need to come to that. But it may have to come to that, at times, and for some people in the world, as we mentioned, it does come to that.

[30 : 38] It's interesting the words, we had more time, we could just look at that. But just follow it through yourselves. The word that he, uses here for laying down his life. By this we know, love, that he laid down his life for us.

It's exactly the same word, you find in John 13, where Jesus laid aside his garments, his outer garment, and put on the towel, symbolizing the role of a servant, and began then to wash his disciples' feet.

This is love, see Jesus is demonstrating there. This is love, that reaches the lowest point, in the service of others. It doesn't seek to kill others, it seeks to actually kill self, to be humble, to do things, to them that will better their lives, that will be for their good.

That's the word that's used, to lay aside his garments. And he laid aside his clothes, then now he's saying, he laid aside his life. And it's a word which indicates, the most precious thing that you have.

That is what love does. That is what love is prepared to do. Not in theory, but in practice. Because you see it, chiefly in Jesus himself.

[31 : 50] The son of God, who took our nature, who came into this world. Who didn't stay at home with the father, you might say. Instead of coming into this world, filled with sin, and with darkness, and opposition to himself.

He took that to himself, he took the sin of his people to himself. And what is most precious of all, his own life. That's what he laid down, that's what he gave, for his people. Am I prepared tonight, to give my most precious possessions, if God calls for them, in love for his people?

I hesitate to say yes. It's not an easy thing to say, but that's the principle, John is dealing with. He laid down his life for us, that's the prime example of love, and giving rather than taking, he laid down his life.

And that's what we seek to follow, isn't it, when we love one another. And that's why, in verse 17, even if we don't, ever have to give our life, literally, we always have to give, what's in verse 17, when we see others in need, especially our fellow Christians, the word brother is used again there, and yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

In other words, if we have the world's goods, if we have the things that, in our own lives, material things, financial things, if we have the wherewithal, we have all of these in place, by the gift of God, by the love of God to us, then when we see our brother in need, we don't just look at that theoretically, and say, I love that person, and that's as far as it goes.

[33 : 33] If we close our heart against him, how does the love of God, abide in him? And he goes on to emphasize that, further saying, let us not love in word, or talk, but in deed, and in truth.

And you notice, there are singulars used, throughout that verse. If anyone, and it's his brother, and it's his heart, and it's in him, and John is including himself, when he says, let us not love, in word or talk.

In other words, somebody had once, apparently had a t-shirt, that said, I love humanity, it's just people, that I can't stand. And while that's amusing, there's also, a very solemn truth about it, it's a lot easier to love, in general terms, than it is to love individually.

But it's individual love, that Jesus is talking about, and that John is talking about, when he says, that we are to love one another. It's not love in general terms, it's not love in theory, it's love in practice, it's love, wherever love can be shown, wherever needs can be met, whoever is in need.

You see, John doesn't say, if it's one of your close friends, then you have to love, and open up your heart to them. No, he says, if anyone, has the world's goods, and sees his brother, whoever it is, in need.

[35 : 06] There's no differentiation, there's no choice given to us, it's made for us. Love, loves individuals.

Love opens our hearts, love opens our bank accounts, love opens our diaries, in the sense of, making time for people, in order to love them, and show, practically our love for them.

That's what John is saying, let us not love, in word or talk, that's relatively easy. We can go around saying, I love my fellow Christians. John's not satisfied with that.

Love has to be shown in practice, wherever their needs can be met. Let's not love, in word or talk, but in deed, and in truth. I came across, a little poem, just as I was preparing, for this evening study. It's a poem by, Dr. Kenneth Moyna, who was a, medical missionary, he was a doctor, but a missionary, and he served, from 1947, to 1964, in Rwanda, Burundi as well.

[36 : 21] And, in the obituary, in the British Medical Journal, it stated, throughout his medical career, the mainspring of his life, was his Christian faith.

That's a wonderful thing, that was taken note of, obviously very clear, in his life. And then, taking the elements of, the fruit of the spirit, from that passage, as you know, in Galatians, chapter 5, verse 22, the fruit of the spirit, is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, and so on.

What he did was, he took the first of those elements, love, and then, he went through the rest of them, and related it, to that first one of love. And he put it, in the form of a poem, and it goes like this.

Joy, is love, exulting, and peace, is love, at rest. Patience, is love, enduring, in every trial, and test. Gentleness, is love, yielding, to all that is not sin. Goodness, is love, in actions, that flow, from Christ within. Faith, is love's eyes, opened, the living Christ, to see.

[37 : 31] Meekness, is love, not fighting, but bowed, at Calvary. Temperance, love, in harness, and under Christ's control. For Christ, is love, in person, and love, is Christ, in the soul.

What wonderful words, just to finish, our thoughts, on this, hugely important topic. My little children, my brother, she said, let us love one another, not in word, or in talk, but in deed, and in truth.

May God bless, these thoughts, on his word, let's conclude, by singing in Psalm 15, from the, sing Psalms version, Psalm 15, on page 16, Lord, who may stay, within your tent, your sacred dwelling place, and who upon, your holy hill, may live, before your face.

And, this Psalm, in keeping with many other Psalms, where you find, human behavior, set out for us, and ideals, of behavior, they were all fulfilled, of course, in Christ, in his life on earth, and this Psalm, is no exception.

Lord, who may stay, within your tent, your sacred dwelling place. Lord, who may stay, within your tent, your sacred dwelling place, and who upon, your holy hill, may live, before your face.

[39 : 21] Whoever walks, the blameless path, who acts, in righteousness, and who will always, from the heart, sincerely truth express.

He has no slant on anyone, nor does his neighbor wrong.

He has no spite, within his heart, or slander on his side.

He honors, her soul, who fear the Lord, the worthless, he'll despise.

He gives the oath, which he has sworn, however, he is, but I the prize.

[40 : 48] He lends his money, he has no charge, no price, can he endure.

Those who behave, in life like this, will always sound secure.

I'll go to the main door, after the benediction. And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you now, and evermore.

Amen.