

Love.

1 John 3:11-24

I. INTRO

- A. In John 3, we read a story of a man, a leader among the Jews, visiting Jesus at night with a simple question about Jesus' miracles
- B. Jesus' response to him is that no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again → born of God, spiritually reborn by the Holy Spirit
- C. Earlier in John, the narrator tells us that by belief in Jesus God gives us the right to be born again
- D. Then here, in 1 John 3, the author says, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God, and so we are!"
- E. But how do you know?
- F. The Camerons just had twins. Do you want to know how I know? I can see them.
- G. But how do you know if your faith actually is genuine, that it has led to a spiritual rebirth that you cannot simply see?
- H. John says that as his children we shall be like him (in part, now – fully, one day)
- I. In the rest of this chapter, he gives two key areas where we shall be like like
 - 1. We will be like him in our righteousness (Since God is without sin, we cannot be friends with sin forever)
 - 2. We will be like him in our love (Since God is love, we will be loving like him)

J. What is love?

- K. Our culture has lots of suggestions for what love is or isn't, but rather than letting culture define love, let's let the Word define it
- L. After all, the Bible is a love story – God's love for us on display, and God rescuing us from an enemy who hates us, wants to destroy us, and seeks our ill
- M. Jesus said the world would know us by our LOVE for one another
- N. Jesus said that His life taught us HOW to love
- O. Jesus said that LOVE would be the greatest of characteristics in our lives
- P. And he said that LOVE (for God, one another, and our neighbor) is the fulfillment of the entirety of the law...
- Q. John here is going to say that LOVE is an evidence of true salvation
- R. Faith, revealing itself in love, is evidence that God's life is at work in you
- S. We don't love to become God's children. We love because we are God's children.

II. *[11] For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. [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 brother's righteous.*

- A. **Point = Love has always been central to following Christ.**
- B. Love isn't an advanced lesson for mature Christians – It's Christianity 101
- C. We should love one another. Look around. Love one another

- D. This has always been the message of the Bible and of Christ
 - 1. He taught love, he lived love, and he died for love
- E. John gives us Cain as a study of the opposite of love, two roads to choose from
 - 1. Retell Cain's story → Cain **hated** his brother. Cain killed his brother.
 - 2. Why? Because his brother's righteousness exposed his own heart
 - 3. Cain didn't murder Abel overnight. Murder started long before the stone was ever picked up.
 - 4. It started with jealousy. It grew into resentment. Resentment became hatred. Hatred eventually became murder. There was no love there.
 - 5. That's why Jesus says hatred is murder in seed form. Most people never commit murder, but every murder begins with a heart that refuses to love
- F. Cain couldn't know love b/c he was filled with hate; he was "of the evil one"
 - 1. What did his hate result in? Murder
- G. If Jesus is the picture of love, Cain is the picture of hate
- H. How do you evaluate your own love or hate?
 - 1. Do you celebrate when other Christians succeed?
 - 2. Do you secretly enjoy when someone falls?
 - 3. Do you refuse reconciliation?
- I. Those are symptoms of the "Way of Cain"

III. [13] Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. [14] We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. [15] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. [16] By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us

- A. Point here = Biblical love distinguishes God's children from the world**
- B. If love marks God's family, don't expect the world to understand it or celebrate it
- C. Cain hated Abel because righteousness exposed darkness. The same thing still happens today
- D. People don't hate Christians because Christians are perfect.
- E. Sometimes Christians are hated because genuine love exposes counterfeit love.
 - 1. E.G. The world sees evangelism as judgmentalism
 - 2. E.G. The world sees exhortation as arrogance
- F. The world can display remarkable affection, sacrifice, kindness, and generosity
- G. But it cannot produce Christ-shaped love apart from Christ Himself
- H. I would even argue that we KNOW what love is ONLY b/c of Jesus
 - 1. When you've experienced his love for you, it changes you → it teaches you and gives you a desire to love like He loves
 - a) To love your enemies, those who hurt you, those who seek you harm, those who want to destroy you
 - b) It empowers you to forgive as he forgave, to care as he cared, etc
- I. The world won't necessarily like that kind of love (shop story re: muslims in 2005)
- J. Love for one another (love like Jesus loved) is a sign of the Way of Jesus
 - 1. Hatred is a sign that you belong to the Way of Cain

IV. *[16] By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. [17] But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? [18] Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

A. Jesus defines true love

B. How do we know love? It says that b/c of Jesus we know love. How did he love?

C. Jesus died

1. Jesus died for our sins, for his enemies, when we weren't asking for help, to make us his friends, adopt us, be with us → amazing love, incomprehensible love
2. We are called to do the same... in essence, not literally
 - a) Not everyone will die for another believer.
 - b) But everyone can die to self.
3. We are called to die to love by valuing others over self, laying down:
 - a) Preferences, pride, convenience, comfort, schedule
 - b) Sometimes laying down your life looks like laying down your day off

D. Jesus gave

1. John goes from the cross... to your wallet.
2. Why? Because talk is cheap, and Jesus demonstrated love by giving generously (blood, bread, time, energy, everything... when people didn't say thank you)
3. John doesn't ask whether you'd die for someone.
4. He asks whether you'd buy groceries for someone.
5. It's easy to imagine ourselves dying as heroes. It's much harder to inconvenience ourselves on Tuesday afternoon.
6. Love isn't amorphous and nebulous like a cloud → it's in the dirt

E. Jesus acted

1. John often uses "truth" to mean genuine or authentic
2. So for John, love can't just be words
3. Love isn't: "I'm praying for you." // Love actually prays
4. Love in truth genuinely means it, doesn't just say it
5. It's not about looking like love for instagram
 - a) Social media \$\$\$ to the poor videos
6. It's about letting love NOT be a charade
 - a) Paul → let love be genuine (not hypocritical act)
7. Not a high five in the church lobby → real love

V. *[19] By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; [20] for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. [21] Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;*

A. Love gives assurance before God

B. "By this" is looking back at the previous section

- C. I think John's point is something like: "My imperfect love encourages me that God's Spirit is actually changing me."
- D. We don't gain assurance because we love perfectly.
 - 1. If they loved perfectly, they wouldn't need ANY assurance
- E. We gain assurance because we see ourselves loving in ways that we wouldn't naturally love in our own flesh, and didn't love in the past
- F. Look at OLD YOU vs. NEW YOU
 - 1. "I actually forgave."
 - 2. "I actually want to serve."
 - 3. "I actually feel compassion."
- G. Those aren't proofs of perfection, and that might even seem silly, but if you knew the old me? You'd realize that they're evidence of my new birth.
- H. I want to comment on "if our heart does not condemn us"
 - 1. Our hearts can be terrible judges → I know mine is
 - 2. Sometimes it excuses sin
 - 3. Sometimes it condemns people
 - 4. Sometimes it convinces me that right is wrong and down is up
- I. John wants you to know that God's verdict is more trustworthy than your feelings
 - 1. Look at the evidence of love...
 - 2. Look at the evidence of growth...
 - 3. It points to assurance of faith → that's freeing for us!

VI. [22] and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. [23] And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. [24] Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (ESV)

- A. With prayer, John is looking back at John 15. He isn't introducing a new subject.
 - 1. John isn't promising that obedient Christians can get anything they want
 - 2. He's saying that children who abide in the Father begin wanting what the Father wants
 - 3. They pray confidently because they know Him and what makes his heart beat → They want the things he wants
 - 4. Children who walk closely will do what God commands
- B. SO... and here's the rub so pay attention... What God does God command?
- C. God's command is faith expressing itself through love**
- D. Look how simple John makes Christianity
 - 1. Believe. Love. Remain.
- E. People often expect a complicated list
- F. John simplifies it. → Believe in Jesus. Love people.

VII. CONCLUSION

- A. Jesus loved us first and greatest
 - 1. Jesus didn't just see you in your sin and say, "I love you"
 - 2. Jesus entered our suffering
 - 3. Jesus carried our sin.

4. Jesus died our death.
5. Jesus rose to give us His life.
- B. That's love, and that kind of love changes people
 1. It turns murderers into brothers
 2. It turns selfish people into servants
 3. It turns enemies into family
- C. And when that kind of love begins showing up in your life, even as a foggy reflection, you should have assurance that Jesus is CHANGING YOU
- D. LOVE is evidence that the God who loved you first now lives in you
- E. The text begins with Cain taking his brother's life, his righteous brother, Abel
- F. Then Jesus, the only truly righteous one, gives us life for unrighteous people
- G. Cain says, "Your life for mine" → that's not love
- H. Jesus says, "My life for yours" → that's love
- I. Let us go and do likewise