

Know What's Real - Love

In the text last week John said “behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us”

We looked at the importance of understanding the wording...

- Behold - to notice, discover, turn your eyes, mind, attention to
- Manner - from what country, nation, or tribe

We are to notice, discover, turn our attention to this love that is not from here. This otherworldly love of God! It's an amazing love the Father pours out on us. It changes us.

Today we're going to look at how that should affect our interactions with others....

1 John 3:11-18 (NKJV)

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

See the way we treat people matters a great deal to God.

If you have any siblings, do you remember when you were a kid, and you would be fighting with your brother or sister or irritating them but as soon as mom or dad would peek around the corner you'd stop and pretend like you didn't do anything?

Or maybe you were the one that was instigating but when mom or dad looked you blamed it on your sibling. You told what they did to you (in response to what you did to them) because if you told first they would be the one to get in trouble...

As soon as no one is looking....whack.

Here's the issue when you look at this from a spiritual perspective.....God is always watching! Not like Santa Claus is watching, but as a Father watches....with love and concern for His children.

I really wish we understood this in its fullness. God sees all. God is not a human that is limited by watching one screen at a time. He's not watching a crystal ball or getting alerts when you do good or bad. He's not in a room with a billion tvs with every life on it's own screen.

God is God. He's unlimited. He literally sees all. He even sees what's not natural (heart, mind). I would go so far as to say He is more concerned about what we can't see....

And it matters how you treat people. It's why He gave us the golden rule...

Matthew 7:12 (CSB)

Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

People use the excuse that they can't help it, they do what comes naturally. But if you are living for Jesus and you are led by the Holy Spirit....maybe you should be thinking and acting less naturally and more supernaturally!

The natural way is: we treat people the way they treat us.

The supernatural way is: we treat people the way God treats us.

WOW.....how has God treated you? He loves you unconditionally. He shows you grace all day every day. He takes care of you even when you don't deserve it. He blesses you beyond measure. And it's all out of His other worldly love....not out of what you have done.

1 John 3:11-12 (NKJV)

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

Love is something we agree with but often don't abide by. We agree with the idea of it but when it comes to acting on it.....

This is the message you have heard from the beginning!

Leviticus 19:18b (NKJV)

but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Matthew 22:36-40 (NKJV)

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

37 Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

John 13:34-35 (NKJV)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

This is the telling factor if you are following Jesus....if you have love for one another. This is genuine care and affection, where the wellbeing of others matters a great deal to you. It's when we treat others as God has treated us.

Jesus cared so much for you that He gave His very life so that you could be forgiven and saved.

“love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother.”

In Genesis 4, we find this account of Cain and Abel. The very first siblings.....there were problems with siblings literally from the beginning....

Abel tended to the animals. Cain worked the fields. They came together with offerings for the Lord, much like we have this morning. Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Abel brought the firstborn of his flock.

It says that the Lord respected Abel and his offering but not Cain and his offering. Cain got angry, God warned him that sin was at the door and it's desire is for you but you should rule over it. Then we see Cain even do what's right (talked with Abel) but then he must not have heard what he wanted because he killed Abel.

This is a story of what hate and jealousy can do in a person's heart. But it's also a story of how God sees us. Why did He respect Abel and his offering and not Cain and his offering?

Hebrews 11:4 (NKJV)

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

This wasn't a winner/loser competition. It was never about whose offering was bigger or better. It wasn't whoever gets the lower grade gets kicked out of the class.

This were individual tests. And what they show us is that yes, God does care what you sacrifice and offer up to Him.

Some of you may not be aware but the primary reason we take up offerings is not that we want your money or even that we need it. It's primarily because it gives you a chance to give an offering to God. If you look around, none of this is mine or ours, it's His.

And when we give our finances to Him, it's an offering. That's why we step down and give. It's symbolic of bringing it down to Jesus. It's a very spiritual act that we do. That's why we do it.

God does care what you give. The bible says we should give of our firstfruits. Give to God BEFORE we buy Christmas gifts or even pay for gas, water, or internet. Why? We should put God first. He should get our best, not what is left over...

If you read back in Genesis 4....always look at the wording. Both brought an offering, but only one brought his best. Cain brought some of the fruit of the land. Abel brought his best, his firstborn.

It reveals their heart. God does care what you offer to Him, but the reason He cares so much is not because He wants you to have less or the "not as good" part. It's because He cares about what is in your heart.

It's why still today, we should check our heart when we give. Ask God if we are giving our best and ask what our heart looks like. It's important. Very important. And this heart check is about more than an offering....is your heart inclined toward God? If so, how is your heart toward other people? It matters because it too can taint your offering...

1 John 3:13-15 (NKJV)

Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Do not marvel (be surprised) if the world hates you...(world = culture)

Have you ever treated someone well but they didn't return the love? John says this will happen and we should not be surprised. Why?

If you are a Christian, Jesus is the center of your life. Everything revolves around Him.

If you are not a Christian, you are of the world, and if you are of the world, YOU are the center of your life and everything revolves around you.

So as a Christian, it's really not reasonable to expect to be received and and loved for everything we do. Because much of what we believe is countercultural!

We have a message to deliver. That God loves people but hates sin. Jesus is the only way to heaven. And if you really meet Jesus your life will be radically changed as He becomes the center.

The world doesn't want Jesus at the center. It wants Him in the closet only to be taken out in times of crisis. (every moment without Jesus is a moment of crisis)

A world without love is a world of hate. But does this world know what love really is?

1 John 3:16-17 (NKJV)

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

How do we know love? By this we know love, because Jesus laid down His life for us.

When the bible speaks of love, it speaks of Jesus and the cross.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

1 John 4:10 (NKJV)

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Romans 5:8 (NKJV)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God is a giver. He gave us His Son. He gave us His first and best!

And this is the evidence that love gives. Love gives.

In a world of givers and takers.....the Christian should be a giver. It may not be your nature, but it should be the supernatural work in you, the understanding of love, that compels you to give.

Someone in here right now is thinking of what someone else should be giving them or doing for them.....you are missing the entire point.

YOU LOVE.....YOU GIVE.

God has given us forgiveness, salvation, a spiritual inheritance, an eternal home with Him. Yet we struggle to give someone a ride in our car or a moment of our time....

It's not about how much you make, it's about your heart. Give what you have to give.

We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers (other Christians).

1 John 3:18 (NKJV)

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

Like all? No, some people are terrible.

Trust all? No, some people should not be trusted.

Friends with all? No, we get to pick our friends. (be friendly to all, friends with some)

LOVE....but not just in word or tongue....we live in a world that likes to talk about what everyone should be doing instead of doing something ourselves....

We live in a world full of hate because that's the natural thing to do.....we have a supernatural response.....LOVE.

If we have received that love, we can't help but give that love. It's not ours to keep. And we can't just talk about it, we've got to show it....

Cain did with his hands what he felt in his heart....he gave his "not best" because he was selfish, he killed his brother because he hated him. Ultimately what is in our heart comes through our hands.....

We need to ask God to examine our hearts today. Only Jesus can see what's really there. Only He knows the reality as He is not deceived and sees all things.

How is your heart?

Where do you have selfishness?

Where do you have hatred?

Who do you need to forgive?

Who do you need to love more?

Ask the Holy Spirit who you can help by meeting a need they have. By laying down your plans to give of your time....

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.