

Christian Love

1 John 3:11-18

Back when I was growing up in the late 60's and 70's the word "love" meant various things. A rock group called "The Doors" (their most famous song was "Light My Fire") promoted the idea that love was this uncontrollable emotion that came upon you when you met the girl of your dreams. A line from one of their

songs was, “Hello, I love you, won’t you tell me your name.”

Back in the late 60’s and early 70’s the word love was also synonymous with sexual activity. Everyone talked about “making love.” A popular saying (used to protest the Vietnam War) was, “Make love, not war.”

And who can ever forget the definition of love that Ali McGraw gave us in the movie “Love Story.” Her heart-touching

words were, “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.”

Yes, back in “the day” the word “love” had several meanings. Love meant different things to different people. But now, as I look back, I realize that I didn’t understand the meaning of REAL love until I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

After I accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord and grew in my personal relationship with him, I came to realize

that REAL love – the “agape” love of the Bible – is an unconditional, unselfish, and sacrificial love. This is the kind of love that Jesus has for us, and this is the kind of love that Jesus wants US to have for one another. Jesus says this in John 13:34,35. “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.”

Unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial love – Jesus love – isn’t something we work up on our own. This “agape” love is a work that God does IN US as we allow the indwelling Holy Spirit to control our lives.

Agape love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5:22,23 we read, “the fruit of the Spirit [what the Holy Spirit produces in us if we let him] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Notice that love is mentioned first in this list of godly fruit. Why? I think it's because love relates to all the other fruit. JOY is love rejoicing. PEACE is love resting. PATIENCE is love waiting. KINDNESS is love caring. GOODNESS is love choosing. FAITHFULNESS is love keeping its word. GENTLENESS is love interacting. And SELF-CONTROL is love in charge.

Jesus wants his followers to be known as people who love. This morning we're

**going to talk about love ... “agape” love
... Jesus love ... REAL love. As we look
at what the Apostle John says about love
in 1 John 3:11-18, I want to encourage
and challenge us to be men and women
who love like Jesus loves.**

**In 1 John 3:11-18 we learn at least four
things about love. First, we learn that
Jesus commands his followers to love.**

**1 John 3:11 says, “This is the message you
heard from the beginning: We should
love one another.”**

Jesus expects his followers to be men and women who love. Love is not a suggestion; it's a commandment. Jesus commands his followers to love like he loves.

Jesus not only TOLD people to love one another, he showed people HOW to love one another. Jesus taught people to love by loving people. How exactly did he do this? By sharing a part of himself with others. That, in a nutshell, is what “agape” love is all about – sharing a part

of yourself with someone else. We'll talk more about this later.

The command to love is one of the many things on God's "do list" – things God expects us to do. In 1 John 3:12, the Apostle John talks about one of the things on God's "don't list." He says, "Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous."

In this verse the Apostle John takes us back to the book of beginnings – the book of Genesis – to the story of Cain and Abel (see Gen. 4:1-16). Cain and Abel were the first sons of Adam and Eve. Cain was a farmer – he worked the fields. Abel was a shepherd – he kept flocks.

In Genesis 4:8 we're told that Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. In 1 John 3:12 the Apostle John calls this evil act murder. The Greek word “esphaxen” translated “murder” in the

NIV means “to slay, to butcher, or to cut the throat.” In my mind I picture Cain grabbing his brother from behind and slitting his throat.

What led Cain to brutally slaughter his brother? As we examine Genesis 4:3-7, we discover that at least two things prompted Cain to kill Abel.

First, Cain brought an offering to the Lord that was unacceptable (vs. 3,5,7) Either the quality of the offering was not up to par or it was the wrong type of

offering. Whatever the case may have been, God did not look with favor upon Cain's offering.

Second, because God looked with favor on Abel and his offering, Cain got angry, and then depressed (v.5). In time this anger and depression led to jealousy and hatred which ultimately led to murder (v.8).

In 1 John 3:12, the Apostle John tells us that as followers of Jesus we must not be like Cain. The sins that dominated

Cain's life – anger, depression, hatred, and jealousy to name a few – must not dominate our life.

Cain hated Abel because Abel trusted in the Lord and obeyed his commands. In 1 John 3:13, we learn that the world will hate those who follow Jesus for the same reason. John says, “Don't be surprised, my brothers [and sisters], if the world hates you.”

One of two things will usually happen to a non-believer who is close to a Spirit-

filled believer. The non-believer will eventually realize the error of his ways and turn to Christ OR the non-believer will eventually develop feelings of jealousy, anger, and even hatred toward the Spirit-filled believer. Unfortunately, many non-believers make the second choice – they choose the way of Cain. This negative response is hard to swallow and often hurts. But no matter how people respond, we must continue to live for Jesus and tell people about him.

Those who are without Christ are lost and are headed for a life of eternal torment.

The only hope these people have is Jesus.

The most loving thing that you and I can do for those who are WITHOUT Christ is help them FIND Christ.

Jesus expects his followers to love like he loves. Loving the Jesus way WILL motivate us to tell people about the Lord. Loving the Jesus way will also give us the assurance that we are truly born again. 1 John 3:14 says, “We know that we have

passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”

Unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial love is a sure sign that you have become a new creation in Christ Jesus (see 2 Cor. 5:17). On the other hand, absence of love is an indication that you have never experienced the new birth (compare 1 John 2:9,11).

This does NOT mean that true followers of Jesus will never feel hatred

toward others. Most, if not all Christians experience this kind of hatred at one time or another, but they also realize that this hatred is wrong and sinful and they ultimately repent and make things right.

Yes, those who truly love Jesus can and do hate, but they do not HARBOR hatred. 1 John 3:15 tells us that “anyone who hates [present tense in the Greek text indicating continuous action – continuous hatred with no desire or intent to repent]

his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.”

So far we've learned that Jesus commands his followers to love like he loves and that those who love like Jesus loves have the assurance that they are born again and new creations in Christ. In 1 John 3:16 we also learn that the cross was/is the greatest demonstration of unconditional, unselfish, sacrificial love. John says, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for

us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”

Various words have been used to describe Christ’s death. Skeptics call it sheer stupidity, absolutely worthless, and outright foolishness. But those who truly KNOW Christ call it love!

Carol and I have a plaque; maybe you’ve seen a plaque like this or maybe you’ve heard the words on the plaque. This is what the plaque says: “I asked Jesus, ‘How much do you love me?’ ‘This

much,' he answered. And then he stretched out his arms and died.”

In Romans 5:8, the Apostle Paul says this. “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered and died so that sons of men might have eternal life. Skeptics can call

Christ's death whatever they want to call it. But I will ALWAYS call it love!

Jesus demonstrated his love for us by laying down his life for us. Now, Jesus calls us to demonstrate our love for HIM by laying down our lives for him and for one another (see 1 John 3:16). We're not talking, here, about a sacrificial death; we're talking about a sacrificial life. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Romans 12:1. He says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers [and sisters], in view of God's

mercy, to offer your bodies as LIVING sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship.”

There’s a sign that I’ve put up at several spots in our church building. I refer to it often because it talks about our commitment to Christ – a commitment we all need to consider and get serious about.

This is what the sign says: “If Jesus Christ is God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.”

Jesus wants us to live a sacrificial life for him. He wants us to lay aside our personal agenda and follow HIS agenda. He wants us to lay it all on the line for him. How committed are we to Christ and his work? Do we live for Christ no matter what? Or do we live for him only when it's convenient? What have we given up to follow Christ? What keeps us from loving and serving Jesus the way we should? What do we need to give up or change to live a better life for Christ?

It's all about choices. In Joshua 24:14,15, Joshua told the people of Israel that they had to make a choice. This is what he said. "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the

Amorites, in whose land you are living.

**But as for me and my household, we will
serve the Lord.”**

**Today Jesus echoes the words of
Joshua and calls us to throw away OUR
gods – to get rid of everything that we put
ahead of him – and serve him with all
faithfulness. Are we ready and willing to
do this? Are we ready and willing to
choose the way of Christ, no matter what?
I hope and pray that we are – for our own
sake AND for Christ’s sake.**

I'd like to look at one more aspect of Christian love before we conclude. This morning we've learned that Jesus expects his followers to love like he loves. We've learned that loving the Jesus way will give us the assurance that we are born again. And we've learned that the cross was/is the greatest demonstration of love. Finally, in 1 John 3:17,18 we learn that loving the Jesus way will compel us to do the Jesus thing.

In 1 John 3:17,18, the Apostle John says, “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.” Love – agape love ... Jesus love ... REAL love – is an action verb. Christ-like love WILL produce Christ-like action. Christ-like love will compel us to give of ourselves to others.

In John 13:35, Jesus says, “All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” If you or I were arrested for being a disciple of Jesus, would there be enough LOVE in our life to convict us? We need think and pray about that. And then, we need to follow up our thoughts and prayers with some action – we need to DO the Jesus thing! Are you with me?