

1 John 3:11-24
Abide In Love

I. Intro

What are the marks of a healthy church? (ask congregation)

I have this awesome book about the marks of a healthy church. It's helpful and super practical. And I think if John were going to write a book on what makes a healthy church his number one thing.... The top mark would that the church demonstrate is that the people love one another.

It's such an important mark of a church. And I am sure we could say this at all different times in history, but right now, in our world and our aggressive culture, the mark of love is desperately needed, isn't it?

I was listening to a pastor this week who was citing an intriguing social survey that was conducted... The survey asked, 'what is wrong with the world' and 98% of the people, as one of their responses said – people do not show enough love.

Then later in the survey they were asked, 'Do you show the kind of love that if everyone in the world showed would make the world a better place?' And get this... 95% of everyone the question said... 'Yes!'

Now let that sink in. 98% of the people said the world needs love, and 95% of the people think they display that love. One of them is wrong. And I think we all know that there is no way that those surveyed showed the kind of love the world needs.

Which brings us back to John. For the world there might be a disconnect, but for the church, this is a non-negotiable. The defining mark of a church has to include love for one another.

In fact, today we will discover that:

There is no genuine Christianity without sacrificial love.

So, as we look through this passage, we are going to engage on three thoughts:

What sacrificial love is not.

What sacrificial is.

How it's unique for Christians.

1. What sacrificial love is not.

1 John 3:12

You know, you gotta love John. He's talking about how we are children of God. And he just addressed the hard topic of sin and how sin doesn't adjust our status as a child of God, because as a child of God we will long for righteousness. And now he comes to another mark, the mark of love. And for most of us love is a feel good topic. But what does John do... he comes right out of the gate with some intense language.

He says, love one another... but not like Cain!

Kelly Mintor, who wrote a Bible Study on 1 John said this:

"The more time I spend with John, the more he reminds me of an elderly grandfather who's seen enough of life to have little use for a filter; he tells it like it is."

And here is John, with little use for a filter, telling it like it is.

We are called to love one another.... So, don't be like Cain.

Let's look for a moment at the story of Cain to better understand what sacrificial love is not.

Genesis 4:3-8

Cain and Abel were both taught how to worship God. But Cain's gift was unacceptable. We see that God invited and pursued Cain in order to help him pursue righteousness. But Cain refuses to respond to God. And Cain's envy gave way to hatred which gave way to murder.

Let's process envy for a second. Envy is wanting somebody's else life. It's looking at someone else and instead of rejoicing in the good they have, you weep over the fact you don't have it. But, envy also leads than to resentment. We don't just want it but we begrudge them.

People who are envious are people who are constantly declaring.... It's not fair!
Now... probably most of us are like... whew, I don't think I am envious. Great.... Let me try and make you a little more uncomfortable.

Envy look like this.... Is there a person in your life, or a person at work or a person in the church or a person you know who you just find so irritating? You're hypercritical of them. You may not even say it out loud, but you find fault with them all the time. They get under your skin. Could it be envy? Think about it. Could it be envy? Do you need to see something wrong with them?

You know where I see envy in my life, is with other pastors. I can pick a part their churches. Say things about how shallow they are or critique what they do. And deep down, I want what they have. Envy is sneaky and dangerous.

Now.... We need to ask, why does John use this the example for what loving one another is not?

How is the picture illustration of Cain, the exact opposite of loving one another?

Well, to be blunt, like John... You can't love sacrificially if you are worried about what is fair and envious of what you don't have. And if you are worried and envious... that makes you a child of the devil, and not a child of God.

You see, if you are envious and it rules your life you are looking for something besides God to be your justification. If God is your justification, you are quick to recognize envy and run from it! And your response to others will be to love them. I John 3:14-15.

John is saying as a child of God... you can't be like Cain! Why? Because he was exactly the opposite of Jesus.

Cain equals Envy & Hatred, Darkness, and Death.

Jesus equals love, and light and life.

So what defines your life? Do you find yourself always being critical of others... or do you find yourself wanting to love others? There's no in-between.

For... **There is no genuine Christianity without sacrificial love.**

So what is the opposite of Cain.... Sacrificial love. So let's process what that is.

2. What sacrificial love is.

I John 3:16

Let's unpack love.... There are lots of different aspects to love. But John wants to summarize it here. He wants it to be super clear... he says, this is how you know what love is...

Sacrifice is the essence of love. We should lay down our lives for our brothers.

The exact opposite of what Cain did for his brother.

Envy and Hatred displays itself in murder. Love displays itself in sacrifice.

Envy and Hatred are revealed by killing and taking. Love reveals itself by giving.

Cain took a life. Love gave up His life.

Cain took action to solve his need. Jesus took action to solve the needs of others.

That's sacrificial love.

James Denny, a Scottish theologian illustrates the power of sacrificial love this way... If I were sitting on the end of a pier and someone jumped into the water and drowned to prove his love for me, I would find that quite silly. I might be in need of love, but an act with no relation to that of my needs could not prove it. But if I had fallen over the pier and was drowning, and someone, to show their love not only jumped in, but took my fate for his own, and died to save me, then I would declare greater love hath no man than this.

There would be a relationship between the sacrifice made and the need for the sacrifice. Jesus didn't die on the cross so people would say... 'that's cool'. He did it because we were dead, and we have no hope. John is not writing about a mushy gushy love. He's writing about the greatest expression of love. Love that is sacrificial. Sacrificial love is not an emotional love, it's a devotional love to the need of others.

This is how we are called to love one another.

Now.... John helps put some real practical thought to this. Because no one in here, since you are still alive has displayed love to the point of death. So John, understanding that, brings it down to earth for us.

I John 3:17-18

In light of Christ's sacrificial love, His self-giving love, we should not close our hearts to fellow believers in material need. And then he says bluntly... don't just talk about love, practice it!

Which means use your resources sacrificially to relieve the needs of others.

I believe that when John was writing this he had a practical picture in mind. He was remembering the night Jesus died, and Jesus laid aside His garments. It's the same verb – he laid his life, laid his garments. In John 13, Jesus gives us the picture of how we love sacrificially in a practical way.

Sacrificial love is engaging with somebody – He got on His knees. Sacrificial love is the service of somebody – He knew their practical needs and met them. Sacrificial love doesn't look for anything in return.

When is the last time you washed someone's feet?

Do you remember the last time someone sacrificed for you? That was and is the essence of love.

Jesus leads us to love. To love sacrificially.

Because... **There is no genuine Christianity without sacrificial love.**

For Christians.... Genuine Christianity will express this love.

But you might be wondering.... Brian can't other people display this love? I mean, can't non-Christians be sacrificial.. just because they are sacrificial doesn't make them Christians.

Which leads us to the final point... what is unique for Christians in regard to sacrificial love?

3. What is unique about a Christian and their expression of sacrificial love?

Religions all around the world command and ask their follows to be selfless.

In fact the command to love one another is not one that is unique to Christianity.

Muslims are commanded to sacrifice. Buddhists pursue sacrifice to attain selflessness.

Mormons want and try to love sacrificially. What is it that makes Christianity unique.

Here is what distinguishes Christianity from all religions of the world and why this passage is unique compared to all other commands in the world to live out sacrificial love.

You see all other religions in the world tell you to live this way in order to become something.

Christianity declares you have the capacity to live that way out of something you've already become.

You are not called to do anything you haven't been equipped to do.

This love is a manifestation of Him in us! It's not a self-effort love.

As we abide we see other people the way He does.

In Christ we are given the status. We are children. And we are told to do something because of an identity we have been given. The reason a Christian doesn't sin anymore is that when you get back into sin, a Christian starts to realize "This isn't me". I've experienced God's love and He's changed me. That's where I want to be.

So, God has changed me from an envious, hateful, selfish person.... He changed me by His love and now gives me the power to love!

I John 3:24

The Holy Spirit has been given to you to empower you to express sacrificial love.

You can't give what you don't have!

You see the greatest love ever is deposited in us! We are motivated to love by love!

Christians are the only people who can pull this off because the power of Christ is in you through the Spirit.

And so friends... hear the call today... You have been loved sacrificially. And so show that love! Let's all this week think of someone in the family of God we can show sacrificial love to. Let's talk with one another about how to show God's love in practical ways. **I John 3:11.... This is the message... love one another!!**

Because... **There is no genuine Christianity without sacrificial love.**

IV. Conclusion

Church... let's repent of our envy. Remember that the antidote of envy is to remember all that you have been given! And as we experience the love of Jesus... let us share with others from that abundance. So, Church... let us love one another, because we can declare with authority that we have been loved!