

1 John 3:11-24

The Fruit of Love

Image Church // First John: Week 6

Introduction

Welcome guests...

Celebrate the start of the Core Class

If you have your Bible, turn to 1 John...

- *If you don't have a Bible, we have one for you at the Connection Center!*

We're continuing our series in 1 John... We're in chapter 3 we're going to pick up in verse 11...

Last week we saw a contrast between those who are children of God and those who aren't...

- A life of rebellion vs. a life of repentance...
- *Continuing in a life of sin vs. being transformed by the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit...*
- This process is called **sanctification**: which the change the gospel brings in your life...

What we're going to see this morning is what the fruit of this change should look like...

I want you to think about love for a minute...

- If you're dating, you just thought about your significant other... If you're married, and you're a guy, you thought about *college football season*... Unless you're an Alabama fan (*had to*).
- All the ladies just thought about *Target*...
- *Kidding, you better not...*

But see, this is our problem... We throw around the word **love** so lightly that we miss what it really is about...

For most people, they think of love as *just a feeling...* But it's so much more than that...

- Here's the thing, if love's **only** a feeling, then when the feeling is gone, so is love... And that's not how it works **practically** or **biblically**...
 - **Example:** I don't always feel warm bubbly toward my kids... But that doesn't mean I don't love them...

Love is more than just warm bubbly and emotional sensations... *Now, you may experience that as a part of love, but it's not the essence of love...*

Love is more than an *emotion*, **it's an action**. Could define it like this, **love is a decision of the will accompanied by action**...¹

Tertullian said *that love is visible*...

- It's visible because it's an **activity** you choose to participate in, not just an emotion that you feel...

The best example of this is God...

- **John 3:16**
- **Romans 5:8**
- **1 John 3:1** *See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God...*
 - ***God's act of love created access for us...**

God didn't just feel a kinda way toward us, He demonstrated his love through action...

- Jesus would come and live in your place and die in your place...
- Raise from the dead to give you new life and access to God...

¹ Joby Martin, *Love Does*

This is the foundation for what John's about to talk about this morning...

1 John 3:11-24

¹¹ For this is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another,

Love one another, speaking specifically about love among believers...

- Should we not love those who are not believers? Yes! Plenty of other places that talk about that and what loving the lost looks like...
- But the focus in this text is among believers...

John references what they've heard at the beginning from Jesus in **John 13:34-35** "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Connect the love of God to us, the love of God through us...

- Love toward one another matters so much because it's an actual playout of what we have received...
 - **When we love one another, we reenact the gospel...**

This love leads to a new community that's formed around the gospel...

- Where we put the gospel on display to one another and the community around us...
- **Here's the thing:** We can't help the world out there do something that we can't do in here!
 - Would be like me loving your kids but not my own, or your wife and not my own... Very confusing to an onlooking world as well!

Now John gives an example of what not to be like in **Verse 12**... We should love one another...

¹² unlike Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Explain the story of **Cain and Abel**... **Gen. 4**

- Adam and Eve's kids...
- Had them after they sinned...
- We see the brokenness and unraveling continue as a result of sin entering the world...
- **Cain** was a farmer who worked the ground...
- **Abel**, his brother, was a shepherd who tended the sheep...
- Both brought offerings to God... God rejected Cain's, and accepted Abel's...
 - **Hebrews 11:4** ... **Difference:** Able had faith lead to first and best...
 - Cain didn't have faith, gave God leftovers...

Cain gets mad that God doesn't receive His offering...

- God confronts Cain... *What's going on with you... Sin in crouching, at your door, rule over it...*
- **Cain** rebels... Kills his brother **Abel**- the first murder in the bible... **BTW:** *Kids of Adam and Eve, see how fast things spiral out of control after sin entered the world...*

John's saying, don't go the way of Cain (cr: **Jude 11**)...

- Don't let sin rule over you like it did with Cain...²
- Live as a Child of God by loving your spiritual brothers and sisters!
- Don't be like Cain, who wasn't a child of God, who lived in a pattern of sin...
- *Appeal against any beef that you might have with a bro/sis!*

Verse 13 John says:

¹³ Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death. Don't worry about the world. Stay focused on the main thing. You've been made new, you've experienced new life in and through Christ...

² There's a contrast here following what John has previously said about the children of God and the Children of Satan... The text says Cain was *of the evil one*... Cain was under the influence of Satan, rather than being under the influence of faith...

- John talked about last week how the world won't recognize you as their own...
- There will be a distinct difference that could bring opposition... Don't worry about that. Stay focused on Jesus and live in light of who He is and what He's done for you...

*This **new love** and **new community** reminds us of who we are and what we've been saved to...*

- New life, new family, new love...
- Don't have that, haven't experienced new life!

Illustration: Being a Carolina fan... Go to a game, I'm reminded of my love... Ain't worried about Duke haters (and NC who?)...

Verse 15:¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

Here's the premise: to not love your brother or sister, is to be a murderer like Cain...

- *How can this be true if you haven't actually killed someone?*

John's making a point:

- If you don't love your brother and sister, you're going the way of Cain, letting your sin rule over you proving you're not a child of God...

You can't truly experience the love of God to you through Jesus and then withhold that same love from your brother or sister...

Verse 16:¹⁶ This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

This is the gospel...

*We came to know love through the **actions** of Jesus, and we live out love through our **actions** toward our brothers and sisters...

John doesn't point us to a feeling. He points us to an action...

Laying our lives down for them like Christ laid His life down for us... Listen, here's why it's so important for us to understand love as an action...

- When we see it as an **action**, it means that we can choose to participate in it even if we don't feel anything...
- So often, we don't love well because we don't feel like loving...
- Our motivation: **JESUS!**

BTW: Let me just say this, I think this often gets overlooked a lot, but this whole idea of loving our brothers and sisters applies within a Christian marriage as well!

- *Some of you hate your spouse... Or you don't feel like loving them...*
- *The gospel says and shows us something different...*
- *The key to saving your marriage is seeing the love of Christ...*

Verse 17 He says this in light of what Christ has done and our call:

¹⁷ If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's love reside in him?

A lot to unpack here... John's talking about meeting the needs of a **Fellow believer...** What he's talking about is Christian-to-Christian interaction...

There are other examples of how Christians are supposed to love and serve those outside of the church in plenty of other places in Scripture... But here, he's describing and instructing the Christian community...

- **Note:** I think you could say that this is true for any Christian interaction, but I think what John has in mind based on who he's writing to and what he's said so far that he's talking about interactions within the local church...

The focus in the NT is always local church, then the world...

- **We can't do "out there" what we want to do "in here"...**

Our ability to reach the world and to care for the world comes out of the faithfulness within the local church...

- We live in a culture where the importance of the church has been watered down...
- And what it does is it minimizes the impact we can have for Jesus...
- It's also inconsistent to the layout the bible gives us
 - The call of the NT is a new compelling community that reflects Jesus to one another and shows Jesus to the world!
- This is why the local church matters so much...

The local church is also a **functional** way that the bible gives us for knowing who our fellow believers are...

- See **1 John 2:18-23**... Very clear...
- **Matthew 16**, Jesus shows us that the church is responsible for affirming those that are truly saved...
- **Illustration: US Embassy overseas validates who you are...**
 - This is the role of the local church...

This is why we do Covenant Membership, and this is why Covenant Membership matters...

- And why we have a process... We ask you about the gospel and your Spiritual Story... You meet with one of our elders...
- The role of the elders are to validate those coming in and then protect them when they come in... **Acts 20:28**
- **Some of you need to take that next step and formally commit to this Spiritual family!**
 - Keeps us on the same page and keeps us pointed in the same direction...
 - That's the goal behind all of this...

Now let's talk about how we meet the needs of fellow believers within the church...

- Great news is the bible lays this out for us...

We see a great example of what John's talking about in **Acts 4:32-35** Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common.³³ With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them.³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold,³⁵ and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed to each person as any had need.

BTW: Notice in this text how this was a local context, and they knew one another and the needs present...

What we see very clearly here is that giving to the local church allows the church to meet the needs of those within it... They pooled their resources, and then those resources were distributed...

- *No one was needy among them... The Church*
- *This didn't fall on one or two people, this was the way they all responded...*
- *People also weren't giving to the point of putting themselves in need... They didn't have to because everyone contributed!*

Appeal: Listen, I need you to know that as a church, we have met a lot of needs from the people among us... I can't share many of them with you because *I want to honor those who have been in need. We believe in dignity here, and it's not loving to present those things...*

- We have more needs that we want to be able to meet...

If you're new with us or a guest, you can tune out for a sec...

Some of you that are part of this church are not contributing to the best of your ability right now, you're giving you're like Cain, you're not giving your first and your best...

- Giving is an afterthought for you...
- This is draining on the folks that are giving...
- Many hands make light work...

Illustration: Road workers...Shovel learners...

One other point of clarity here... You don't just give to the church and check the box and then turn a blind eye to additional needs that come up in the life of our church...

- This is not how Jesus or the early church modeled generosity...
- ***It's not about just marking a line item in your budget, this is about Christ-like love and generosity!***

Last thing here... Let me say this to those of you who are here and may not be a Christian...

- What I hope you see is a selfless community full of people that love Jesus and love one another...
- You cannot find that in any other type of community...

Verse 18:

¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.

It's one thing to say that you love your brothers and sisters in Christ within this spiritual family... It's another thing to actually show that love by meeting their needs...

And this is where the rubber meets the road with what you really believe...

This is where again, we see love as an action that you participate in, not just words that you say or things that you feel!

Verse 19:

¹⁹ This is how we will know that we belong to the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things.

Here's what John's saying...

- You're radical love for one another is evidence that you know the legit truth of Jesus...
- The truth of Jesus isn't lip service it's life surrender... It's knowing who Jesus is and what He's done and what that means for your life...

And it's ***the truth of Jesus*** that reassures our hearts whenever our hearts condemn us... ***What does he mean?***

- He's talking about whenever we object to legitimate calls for generosity when we are in a position to help.³
- And what he's showing us here is that when that happens, ***it's a heart issue***...
 - *Not bearing the fruit of love, we have to go to the **root**, which is **our heart**...*
- And even though other people may not see this gap, God does... *He knows all things, He sees your heart!*

But watch this, John doesn't point us to trying harder, he points us to the greatness of God and **how He's overcome our hearts!**

Gospel connection...

- *The way you move forward in your love and generosity toward your brothers and sisters is by seeing the love and generosity that Jesus has had for you!*
- We talked about this last week, this is how our hearts are transformed! This is how we grow in the things of Jesus!
- It's the gospel that transforms our hearts and motivates us to be generous...

Verse 21: ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive whatever we ask from him because we keep his commands and do what is pleasing in his sight.

³ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 141.

John's saying when we reorient around the gospel, it brings us confidence... **Why?** Because that's the heart of Christianity to continue in the gospel! To continue in faith...

*And then what He says next is really cool... Not only do we have confidence **in our identity before God**, but we can have confidence in the power of God to answer our prayers!

- Reorienting around the gospel isn't a ritual, it's a reminder of who we are and what we have access to!

He says we will receive whatever we ask...

- *Some of y'all are fired up... You have a lot of things you want!*

But we have to take this in **context**... *He's not talking about naming and claiming...*

Charles Spurgeon: *The man of obedience is the man whom God will hear, because his obedient heart leads him to pray humbly, and with submission, for he feels it to be his highest desire that the Lord's will should be done. Is he not one with God? Doth he not desire and ask for exactly what God intends? How can a prayer shot from such a bow ever fail to reach its target?*⁴

When you're oriented around the things of God, your prayers are in line with the heart of God and the will of God, and God always answers prayers in line with His own heart and will!

***BTW:** Just because we don't get the answer that we wanted or in the way we wanted to receive it doesn't mean that we didn't receive what we asked for!

Illustration: Praying for patience...

- You pray for patience, you might get a tough situation!

Verse 23:

²³ Now this is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps his commands remains in him, and he in him. And the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he has given us.

John gives a very clear summary here, **and the order matters**...

- **Believe in Jesus**... This is the foundation... The love of Christ.
- **Love one another**... God's love to us means that God's love flows through us to one another...
 - You are saved from something to something, the church, and Jesus has called His church to love one another in a way that puts Jesus on display to the world...
 - Living out this command is a gospel reenactment to one another that serves as a reminder to us and to our brothers and sisters of what we have received...
- This kind of living gives evidence that Christ is in you through the power of the Holy Spirit...
 - This kind of love can only be produced through the power of God!

Will we do this perfectly, no! But when we fail, we go back to the gospel... This is how we **remain**...

- **Remain:** 14 times so far in 1 John...

Conclusion [VAMP]

So what do we do with all of this?

Some of you need to receive the love of God this morning...

- I want you to see the beauty of Christ and His church!

For others of you, where are the gaps in your love for one another?

- Don't have a Christ-like heart toward bro/sis?
- Not meeting needs?
- Not giving?

Would be a radical compelling Christ-centered community that models Christ-like love toward one another!

⁴ Spurgeon, "The Conditions of Power in Prayer," emphasis added