

That our joy may be complete – 1 John

1 John 3:11-24

“Laying Down our Lives” – April 5th, 2020



Introduction

Family resemblance isn't merely physical, it's also spiritual. Those who have been *born of God* ([3:9](#)) should resemble their Father and what He's like. So, to help us know where we stand with God, John provides three tests: *the obedience test, the truth test, and the love test*. His tests don't show how to *earn* our way to God, they show *if* we've been changed by God, if we *are* His child. Here in 3:11-24, John focuses on the love test for a second time: do we love our brothers and sister in Christ? To help us answer that question, John shows us the nature of Christian love – *first* by showing us what it isn't (with Cain), *second* by showing us what it is (with Jesus).

Pray

Before you begin, take some time to ask God to help you understand His word, to reveal what needs to change in you, and for the grace to follow Him in response. To help, use [Psalm 119:33-40](#) as a prayer for God to open His word up to you.

Sermon Outline

- I. Rejoice in the goodness of others (3:11-15)
- II. Give to meet the needs of others (3:16-18)
- III. Silence doubts with God's greatness (3:19-24)

Read & Discuss

- 1) Read [1 John 3:11-15](#)

Through the example of Cain, John shows us what love *isn't*. In Genesis 4, we see how Cain killed his brother because his deeds were evil, and his brothers were righteous. In other words, he resented his brother's goodness for how it made *him* feel: guilty, uncomfortable, and angry. This envy or selfishness come from being forgetful and unaware of God's love, care and provision. If we believe we're on our own, looking out for #1, we're left to determine our value and identity by how we measure up and/or compare to others. If our value depends on how we perform compared to others, people are obstacles to avoid or get out of our way – not people to love. Do you rejoice in the goodness you see in others, even if it exposes a bad habit, weakness or sin in yourself? How does being loved by God as His child help us avoid the comparison rat-race the world is running on?

Additional Reading: John 3:19-21, Matthew 5:21-22

2) Read [1 John 3:16-18](#)

Having seen what love *isn't*, John looks at what love *is*. To answer what love is, he points us to Jesus, who laid down His life *for us*. When He saw our plight God in His mercy did not stand by and do nothing. John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." If we've *received* His love, we cannot use it as an excuse to be selfish...we are to love as He loved: giving of ourselves, even at great sacrifice, for the benefit and well-being of others.

What are different areas that are opportunities for you to deny yourself and give for the benefit of others? How does seeing God's love for us in Christ motivate and set us free to love others?

Additional Reading: Philippians 2:3-5, Mark 10:45

3) Read [1 John 3:19-24](#)

What if we look in the mirror and see selfishness? What if our heart condemns us? Being a good pastor, John pauses to remind us, "Get your eyes off of yourself, off your circumstances and look up at God!" God is *greater* than our hearts! I love the truth we sang in "It is Well"

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to His Cross, and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

Knowing this, our hearts rest before God and we remember that through Christ, we have access to come to God (see [Heb. 4:15-16](#)). As we come, God hears, provides and we are changed! Can you see the Spirit's work in your life to make you more loving? Can you see it in others? Praise God for His work, point out such evidences of grace, and rest in God!

*Paul Miller's book: [A Praying Life](#) is a wonderful resource on overcoming cynicism in prayer and learning how to pray to God as our Father. Check it out!

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come.

If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at <https://fbcum.org/sermons-new/>

*Next week's sermon text: we turn to 1 John 4:1-6 "Victory in Jesus"
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