**No Love? Know Death!**

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**1 John 3:13-16**

2nd Sunday after Trinity

06.13.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

How many different ways can you spell no/know? I know, that sounds like a strange question. But you really have no way of telling to which word I am referring, unless I define it? In a spelling bee you would probably ask me to use it in a sentence – as I just did in the previous two sentences.

So, look at the bulletin. You will notice the sermon title – No Love? Know Death! Know Love! No Death! There are two different spelling of what you hear as the word no/know. They are words that sound the same, but, as you can see, they are very different in meaning.

Our text truthfully says the same thing; Whoever does not love, abides in death. That is a very succinct summary of the entire Law of God. We are commanded to: love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength; and to love our neighbor as ourself. That’s a tall order. It is a command of which we fall far short.

Want proof? Look around at the pews today. How many people that you know are members of this congregation are not here? OK, some might have been here on Wednesday? If they loved God – and trusted Him completely – they would hold the preaching of His Word and the receiving of His sacrament sacred, they would gladly be here to hear it and learn it, to receive God’s gifts with glad hearts.

Ask yourselves if you love God with all your heart, mind, and strength. How about asking it this way, what did you do with federal COVID stimulus checks you received? Was your first thought upon receiving them, “what percentage will I give to God and the building up of His kingdom?” I know what my first thought was about that check, and I prayed for God’s forgiveness.

What about our neighbors? Do we really love them? Our text says it quite plainly, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

According to God’s Word, you do not need to pull out your Kbar and stab someone in the heart to kill them. If you have hatred in your heart toward someone, you are a murderer.

Let us completely understand this, Jesus declared, “If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Matt. 6:14-15) This means that our unwillingness to forgive is the same as saying that Christ’s death for their sin was not payment enough. That is an unwillingness to love, for it is the same as saying you have the desire that they perish eternally.

You know, Jesus took these homophones to a new level. He came to know death, becoming intimately acquainted with death on the cross. He knew death because He more than knows love! He is love incarnate. It is out of His great love for you, for me, for all mankind, that He knew death so intimately, so that we might have no death.

It is this love of God in which we are to abide. We are to know His love intimately through the hearing of His word and the receiving of His body and blood in the blessed sacrament. These are the gracious means God has instituted to bestow upon us His love, and to remove from us the knowledge and fear of death. Even more, to take death away from us.

When we have no love, when we refuse to immerse ourselves in the love of God in Christ Jesus, when we ignore the absolution by which His love for us cleanses us of our sin, we are on the road to know death eternal. When we forget the love of God, given in baptism, we abide in death. When we neglect Christ’s love, given to us in His body and blood for us Christians to eat and to drink in the Lord’s Supper, we are courting death.

God’s love in Christ Jesus, He desires to give to us. Christ LOVES to give forgiveness and life to us. When we act like those in the Gospel lesson who had other things to do and refused the invitation to receive His gifts of love, we are despising God’s gifts.

But God does not relent. God knows of our sin and of our death. He wants us to know His love and grant to us His life. You have knowledge of Christ’s work for you. You know He was born of a virgin and lived a perfect life that He lovingly sacrificed unto death to pay for your sin. We know that He rose again on the third day, proclaiming the victory over sin and death won. You know that He ascended into heaven and that there, He pleads your case before the Father. But head knowledge is not all that is necessary.

Dearly beloved of God, it is by His grace that God wants to save you, by His undeserved gift to you. His grace comes to you in these marvelous gifts to you. These gifts bestow upon you the love of God in Christ Jesus, and work faith in you to trust the benefits of His perfect life and His innocent suffering and death. Know that you are forgiven – that God’s love gives to you eternal life – that His love grants salvation.

Now is where we take those homophones and switch them. Write them in your hearts and minds. When you, by faith, know (K-N-O-W) love, God’s love for you in Christ Jesus, there is no (N-O) death.

Dearly beloved of God, you know love. Love absolves your sins – those times when your love for God faltered and failed, and those times you loved yourself more than your neighbor.

You know love, for baptismal waters cover you, removing sin and death. In your daily contrition and repentance, your baptismal waters are renewed in the love of God for you, keeping you free from sin and granting you life eternal, so you have no death.

Today, you know love again. Come to the table. Eat and drink of the love of God in Christ Jesus, His body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sin. When you eat and drink, you know True Love – God’s gracious mercy grants forgiveness and salvation, there is no death. Christ dwells within you, and you are in Christ Jesus.

You have eternal life in Christ, for you KNOW the love of God for you in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God! Amen.