**World’s Love? Hatred?**

**1 John 3:13-18**

Trinity II – 06.26.2022

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

*Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

*By this we know love that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

Dearly beloved of God, we really need to seriously consider the words of this text. There are some troubling words here if we truly believe that what John records in this letter ***is*** God’s Word. Let me say this so you can hear it clearly. ***I believe*** that what John recorded for us is not his word – nor his opinion – nor something that was intended only for his original audience, but is now outdated.

***This is God’s Word!*** It is God’s clear proclamation for us today – just as much as it was for the original recipients of this letter. As such, if we take it seriously, it will cause us to stop…pausing us to consider what it clearly states to us.

I wonder if you noted this. If you are a Christian, bound to God’s Word as the rule and norm of your Christian faith ***AND*** ***life***, the world hates you. This might move you to ask, “Why does the world hate you?” The world hates you – it hates us – because it hates true love.

True love is not a feeling in the heart toward another. True love is focused outwardly. True love always seeks the well-being of others. True love may often find itself having to sacrifice self for another. Through John’s pen, God declares, *“By this we know love that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*

Who is this “He” who laid down His life for us? Jesus, God’s Christ!

The “world” does not understand us because it thinks that Christianity is simply about morality.

We could talk about the 10 commandments, but they address more than just morality. The first three commandments address man's relationship to God. God does not let us make up our own rules about how we relate to Him. God has requirements of what He demands of us in regard to our relationship with Him.

He demands us to fear, love, and trust Him above ***ALL*** things – including self.

He demands that we use His name correctly.

He demands that we gather together regularly – no, it is not acceptable to God to say or believe, “I don’t need to go to His house in order to be a Christian.”

God ***DOES NOT*** conform Himself to be what you know and feel in your heart. In fact, God declares that what comes out of man’s heart is sinfulness. What we know and feel in our hearts has to do with keeping me happy. It focuses on what I want for myself, what I can get for me.

Our relationship with every one of our neighbors is what God addresses in the second table of the law, the last seven commandments. Your neighbors are anybody but yourself. It begins with your closest neighbors, the members of your own family.

God’s demands in regard to your neighbors includes everyone who has lived, and ever will live on His creation. Your neighbors are more than just those who are living right now. This means you can sin against those who have lived in the past, and those who will live in the future.

These are much more than just moral issues. They are God's commands as to how we are to relate with one another. Interestingly, we hear them first as negatives, “Thou shalt nots…” Jesus, God Himself, and our text, God's word to us, address these commandments as positives. “We love the brothers.” “We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” “If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes heart against him how does God's ***LOVE*** abide in him?” “Little children let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."

There is no religion out there which does not have laws for life. In fact, the most strict amongst them are the Islamic laws.

Interesting, Japan's Osaka District Court declared that marriage is for the bearing and raising of children. This declaration has already raised the ire of those who want to base their morality on their own desires.

We need to narrow down what it means to be a Christian. You and I are not Christians because we keep God’s commandments. Nor do we think we are better than others – at least, these things better not be.

In fact, it should be just the opposite. We are Christians because we believe that we have not fulfilled God's commands as we ought. We have egregiously violated those commands. In other words, Christians know and believe that we are sinners. We know that the wages of sin is death.

It is for this very reason that we also know what true love is. For *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* He gave His life as the sacrificial payment to appease the Father's wrath against our willful disobedience against him – to pay the debt of death we owe.

We also understand that God did not give His commandments to be cruel to us, but out of love for us.

If all the world were to abide perfectly to His just and righteous demands, there would be no evil. If all loved perfectly, sacrificially, as Christ has loved us – there would be none who hurt another in any way, shape, or form.

God’s creation was given to us all. All that I have in His creation is not mine, but God’s gift to me.

All that you have in His creation is not yours, but God’s gift to you.

And as He has given this to you, He has done so that you may use it to love – that is – to serve your neighbor.

Our epistle says it this way, *if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

We like to think what is ours is, is all ours. It is ours by the sweat of our brows. It is ours to do with as we please. It was placed here for us to enjoy. Our world revolves around our own desires – “it is all about me.”

It is even funny how people agree with God’s commandments until it affects us personally. Then, when someone points it out to us that ***we*** *are in violation* of God’s will in that regard, then that commandment becomes wrong! Those who pointed it out are vile! It is none of their business.

***Loving*** parents do tell their children, “No!” They do it out of love for their children, not out of cruelty.

God not only loves us by saying, “NO!” He loves us so very much that He gave His own Son to die upon the cross. He suffered in His own flesh the very punishment we deserve for our unloving behaviors.

The world hates us because they want to believe they can do it for themselves. They do not need a Savior! It would mean they are helpless.

They do not need forgiveness! They are fine on their own.

True Christians gather together because they know their sinfulness, they have not loved as God has loved them.

They come knowing they need to be forgiven and refreshed so that they might love.

Christians gather together to receive the very precious gifts that Christ purchased upon the cross – forgiveness of sins. Why? Because where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also eternal life and salvation.

That forgiveness Christ purchased upon the cross is dispensed when God’s children gather in His house to receive those gifts.

We gather, remembering that we are God’s beloved children – that we are adopted into the family – nay, even more, united to Christ’s death and resurrection through the miracle of baptism.

We hear a Word of forgiveness spoken into our ears. Christ, the very Word of God is spoken and delivered into our ears, and our hearts are made glad.

Gathering at Christ’s table for His holy meal, we take into our mouths the very body of Christ pierced upon the cross, and His flesh strengthens us in faith to trust that as He died and rose again, so in forgiveness we live in the salvation that is ours.

We receive, poured between our lips, the very lifeblood of Him who died and now is ascended to the Father’s side – His lifeblood filling us to everlasting life.

I pray the Lord richly bless you into repentance unto the forgiveness of sin, and in that forgiveness – He richly grants you peace beyond all understanding. In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.