

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-8

Sermon: What Men Lives By?

### 1. Meeting of Semyon and Mikhail

Semyon the shoemaker lived in a farmer's house whom he rented a room from. He went to the store to buy sheepskin, and on the way home, went to collect money from the farmer, whom he often repaired shoes for. But Semyon did not receive even a penny from the farmer, and became drunk and filled with rage. On his way home, he saw a naked man lying on the corner of the street, in front of the church, freezing. Generous Semyon could not pass a man who was freezing to death, so he put his coat on him and took him to his home. Semyon's wife Matryona became angry and cursed at him. But Semyon replied, "Matryona, is there no God in your heart?" She relented and offered the freezing man a bed and clothes. The name of the freezing man was Mikhail, and he was being punished by God outside the church.

### 2. Encounter with the Gentleman

Semyon said to Mikhail, "You have to work if you want to live with us." Mikhail said, "Yes, I'll do anything," and learned to mend shoes. Surprisingly, the beginner Mikhail was a better worker than the skillful Semyon. Mikhail was smart, and was able to copy Semyon's techniques even from basic demonstrations. The rumor spread of Mikhail's talent, and Semyon was able to make a lot of money and improve his living situation. One day, a gentleman ordered him to make shoes that would not burst even after a year of wearing them. While Semyon was looking at the expensive leather and wondering what would happen if he messed up, Mikhail began working on that order. But Mikhail messed up the order and made sandals instead of shoes. Semyon angrily asked him, "Why did you make sandals instead of shoes?" While he was yelling the gentleman's servant came in, saying that the gentleman had died in his carriage on the way home, and to make sandals instead of shoes.

### 3. Meeting with two children

Six years passed, and Mikhail continued to work at Semyon's shop. One day a woman ordered shoes for her twin girls. Semyon When I asked what kind of children they were, the woman answered. "Six years ago, the parents of the children died. The father died

before the children were born and the mother died while giving birth. I was their neighbor and had an 8 month old son of my own, so I adopted these children. Unfortunately, my son died early, but my mill business grew successful, and I was able to love and cherish these girls as if they were my own. Upon hearing this, Matryona said, "Even if you can live without parents, you can't live without God."

#### 4. Angel Mikhail

At that moment, the room lit up and Mikhail became an angel. Seeing this, Semyon asked in fear, "You laughed three times when you came to my house, why did you laugh?

Tell me why God punished you." Mikhail said, "Six years ago God commanded me to bring a soul to him. I went to the mother of the child who I was supposed to bring to Him. But she begged me not to take him, and my heart weakened. I returned to God saying that I couldn't keep his command. God told me, 'If you bring the child's mother instead, you will know 3 questions.'"

'What is in a person's heart? What is not given to people? What do people live for? You will know the meaning behind these questions." God said. Until then, Mikhail was told to live among the people. "That is why he was curled up naked on the cold street," he said. "Semyon, you found me while I was dying. Under Matryona's and your hospitality, I learned that inside people is God's love. That's when I got my first question answered. Next, a nice gentleman ordered a pair of shoes that could last a year but I knew he was going to die soon. And so I knew the answer to the second question of what is not given to man. What is not given to people is that they themselves do not know what they need. The third answer of 'what do people live for' was answered by the mother who lost her son. People live to love.

Everyone seems to live with thoughts of their own happiness, but in reality people live because of the love that exists. Despite people seeming to live as if worrying about themselves, they are in fact living out of love. People that love are living within God, and God is living within them, because God is love.

With that, Mikhail returned to the heavens.

#### 5. God's love for us by giving his Son as a fellowship offering

This story is based on the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, who wrote the novel "what men

live by" in 1884. What do people live by? Love. 1 John 4:7-8 says, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

These verses tell us clearly. Only those who love can know God's love. Why is this? Because God is love. So only those who practice love can seek God's heart and find it. Romans 1:20 says, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."

God is invisible. Has anyone ever seen God? God is hidden. God plays hide and seek with humans. God created this world and entrusted it to man. He chose to hide in a world he created with his own hands, in order to give complete and unrestricted freedom to humans. God's character is engraved into creation because he created it. People cannot find God through only things in this world. But many high religions look for a God and find almost identical beings. The universal being is based around love.

Many of the world's higher religions believe that God is loving and merciful. For example, Buddhism does not use the word God, but the ultimate truth is mercy. In Confucianism, the most basic human character is love, but it is called benevolence.

There is no higher religion in which the ultimate truth is violence or evil. That is because the greatest part of God is love, and it is embedded into his creation, the world.

1 Corinthians 13 says that even if everything in this world disappears, "love" does not disappear. "Love never fades. But the prophecies are gone, the tongues have ceased, Knowledge also disappears." Why doesn't love go away? Love is the substantial truth of the universe. The substantial truth of the universe is God. So God is love. Love never fades because God never fades away. When people live in love, it means we live in the pursuit of God. Only those who love can know God. Only those who love can know God's heart. I would rather have my children turning out to be loving people than successful and knowledgeable people. All the ultimate truths in the world are within love.

John said that God sent his one and only son to the earth to show his love for us, as a sacrifice for the fellowship offering for our sins. There is no greater love than this. What is a fellowship offering? Is it because the sacrifice has God's love hidden within? People used to make sacrifices by slaughtering an animal so that the priest could burn part of the animal and offer it to God. The rest of the animal (the meat) was given back to the

people so that they could share with their neighbors. It was a law to eat all the meat that was offered as a fellowship offering that day. Was it possible for one family to eat a whole cow in one day? No. That's why they shared it with their neighbors. So on the day of the fellowship offering, a neighborhood feast is held. The person who held the fellowship offering invites his neighbors, sharing the meat and joy. The main purpose of the fellowship offering is to maintain a harmonious relationship with the neighbors. Another purpose is to pray and let the poor and underprivileged neighbors - those who struggled to make ends meet - can taste the meat through the offering. The fellowship offering was a sacrifice method intended to show God's mercy toward the poor.

What does it mean that God sent his son as a fellowship offering? It means that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was a peace offering for many people. God knew that if people lived their life like Jesus with an attitude of willingness and sharing with others then it would become a harmonious world. God wants a world where not just I eat well and live well, but where we share our successes and fortunes. Just as the sinless Jesus bore the sins of others, I also live with the attitude of bearing the burdens of others. Even if my neighbors have done nothing for me, I will treat them as if they have shared the meat of their offering with me. God's final hope that he has given to us is that we will treat and share with others, even the unfortunate, our love and fortunes.

What do people live for? The answer is love. I hope the world will get to know God through our actions, as we love God and also love our neighbors. Loving Friends, let us love each other. Because love first came from God. God wishes for us to share our success and fortunes with those around us. Like Semyon and Matryona, I hope we become sharing, caring, and loving people.