

Love – It's A Heart Thing

1 Jn 3:11-20

We have spent the last couple of weeks talking about sin and its consequences, and as you read through Chapter 2 and even into chapter 3 John continues to talk about sin. In fact, in this short book, the Greek word for sin was used 27 times. John really wanted to be sure his readers got the message.

As we move into the middle of Chapter 3, John begins looking at a more positive side of Christianity, the side of love. It's love that saves us from sin. It's love that blesses others. It's love that glorifies God.

The first time I went to Malawi, we got off the plane and started through customs. When the man searching our luggage asked us why we were in Malawi, Dad told him we were from the church of Christ at Blessing Hospital to teach in a workshop. When he heard we were connected with Blessings he said, "ah Blessings, you really help our people. Welcome" zipped up our bags and waved us through. The compassion shown at Blessings radiated throughout that part of the country. That's the kind of love and compassion God wants us to show to others.

PRAYER

I. The Measuring Stick

A. We like to measure ourselves to see improvement

1. I used to stand up by the wall and measure myself to see if I had grown any since the last time I measured. I finally quit doing that when I hadn't grown in 30 years.
2. Athletes work to beat their last time, or last year's record.
3. Businesses rate themselves by how they are doing now compared to business last year or last decade.
4. Each year our mutual fund sends a statement showing how it did compared to other like mutual funds.

B. We do that even as Christians

1. Is our church bigger this year than last year?
2. Are we giving more?
3. Did we have more baptisms?
4. I don't sin as much as Joe does, so I must be better than him.

C. The only measure is how we compare to Christ.

1. (Make my own measuring tape to say I am 6 foot tall)
2. As I said, I used to measure myself all the time, but since I hit 6 foot, I have quit needing to do that.
3. What you don't believe me? Look! (stand by my tape)
4. Reality check: My measuring stick may say I am 6 foot, but that doesn't really matter because it isn't set with the right measure.
5. Only our official measurement standards matter. No matter what my stick says, the real measure is that I am 5'4". ...Even if I identify as a 6 foot man!
6. I think we need to measure our spiritual growth but it needs the right stick.
7. When I compare myself to other people, depending on whom I pick, I can come out smelling pretty good.
8. When I set my own standards, I come out pretty good.

9. I can identify myself as a great Christian all I want.
10. The problem is, the only standard we can measure ourselves against when it comes to spirituality is Christ.
11. When I do that... I don't do so well on that measure.

D. So, do we quit?

1. I am doomed to fail on that measurement, so I might as well quit and not waste my time, right?
2. As I talked about in our last lesson, that is why Christ died for us.
3. We can't be good enough.
4. We can't be holy enough.
5. But he was, so he showed his love for us by becoming our only hope. Our sacrifice.
6. Luckily, he give me a box to stand on to meet the right measurement, it's called grace.
7. It's the only chance I have to reach perfection on the Jesus measuring scale

II. Love One Another

A. Christian Love

1. I got a good lesson of Christian compassion a few years ago when we first got involved with the Malawi work. After we listened to Dad and Dick talk about the work in Malawi, Helene turns to me and says, "we need to give them something". All I had was money given to me for my birthday, so I gave Dad \$20 feeling good about myself. Helene gave me the lecture about how much we have and how little they have and that I should be more compassionate and give from our means not just excess money from

someone else. Helene is that kind of person. She hates being in debt, but would give her last penny and go into debt to help someone in need.

2. She has a better grasp on compassion than I do.
3. 1 John 3:17 (ESV) — 17 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?
4. Compassion for others is a reflection of God's love for us.
 - a) We are his sermon of love.
 - b) When no one else cares, we should.
5. There's a lot of debate about illegal aliens and refugees coming into our country right now.
6. You can argue one way or the other on what's the right politics on those issues, but let's get out the right measuring stick, Jesus.
7. As a Christian, we reach out and love people in the name of Christ, whether they are here legally or not and whether they might be a potential terrorist or not.
8. Let's read vs 17 one more time. 1 John 3:17 (ESV) — 17 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?

B. More than words

1. A story is told about a family that lost their home in the mid 1800's in a small farming community. The family's church called a meeting to pray for this family and everyone gathered at the building to begin praying for them. A little late a teenage boy comes in and says, "Dad's sorry he couldn't be here tonight, but wanted me to bring his prayers in the wagon." In the wagon were flour, potatoes, cured ham and other need items for this family.

The rest of the church got the message and returned home to gather essentials for the family.

2. It's great when we talk about compassion and love.
 - a) I can preach some fine sermons on the topic.
 - b) We can pray for the needs of people less fortunate than ourselves.
 - c) We can talk about the need till we are blue in the face.
3. What really makes a difference is when we act on those words.
4. When we help our church members in need, I am very proud of us.
5. I have busted at the seams when have had special collections for a family or hosted a grocery Sunday to help our members that could use a boost.
6. but what about the Christians in need that we don't know and love?
7. What would happen if we started showing that kind of compassion to the poor and needy right here in our town?
8. I know all the negative arguments; I've used most of them.
9. But what if we started concentrating on the positives?
10. What if we all started doing more things like what Jay is doing with the food box program?
11. What if we found other ways to show compassion besides just donating money to United Ministries?
12. Wouldn't it be interesting to see what might happen if we showed God's compassion instead of just talking about it?
13. v 17 – "closes his heart" Gr word means to shut the door on compassion.
14. Will we shut the door or open it wide?
15. Vs 18 – 1 John 3:18 (ESV) — 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.
16. Will we talk or will we do?

III. Back to the Heart

A. God knows everything

1. John moves the conversation from the physical to the heart starting in vs 19.
2. I found some interesting research on these verses.
3. 1 John 3:19–20 (ESV) — 19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; 20 for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.
4. vs. 20 uses a word for condemnation that isn't the usual word.
 - a) This word has in mind the concept of self-condemnation or to accuse one-self
 - b) The ESV translates this word better than most of the translations out there. "If our heart does not condemn us."
5. This should be important for us, because much of our bad conscience is self-imposed.
6. It's not the conviction of the HS in our lives; it's the lies of Satan as he tries to defeat us.
7. I had a woman come in to my office feeling isolated and alone because she felt everyone in church disliked her. Through our discussion, I found that some very significant people in her life had put her down so much that she

had no self-confidence in her relationships. That translated to everyone must feel she is inferior, when the reality was far from the truth.

8. That must have been what these saints were feeling after being attacked continuously by false teachers.
9. John tells them, that they are condemning themselves when God wasn't.
 - a) He sees the real them,
 - b) He knows their hearts.
 - c) He knows their actions and attitudes.
 - d) He knows their failures.
 - e) And he isn't condemning them.

B. Have you ever felt that way?

1. Is your heart is burdened with guilt?
2. Do you feel you aren't worthy to serve God?
3. Who is condemning you at those times, outside influences or the one that really matters?
4. Don't let failure stop you from being all that God believes you can be.
5. In vs 21-24 John combines the physical and spiritual together.
6. 1 John 3:21–24 (ESV) — 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 Whoever

keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

7. Live in Him and He will live in you.
8. Follow Him and don't condemn yourselves but have confidence before God.
9. Not because you earned his love and grace, but because you responded to his love and grace by showing love and grace to others.
10. Remember the real standard God has given us to measure ourselves by...and remember the box he offers us to stand on to reach that perfect standard.