

“DEADLY HATE VS. LIFE-GIVING LOVE.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: I John 3:11-18

Introduction.

At our Woodyard family Christmas gathering this year we played a game of This or That. People had to go to one side of the room or the other based on their preference for this or that. Starbucks or Woods, Huskies or Cougars, Coke or Pepsi, Packers or Seahawks, turkey or ham.

Using contrasts and comparisons are great tools in teaching and effective in writing essays. We are helped to understand some things by looking at the opposites. John has been using this tool very effectively in his letter.

Walk in darkness and walk in light
Say we have no sin and confess our sin
Love the world and love the Father
Children of the devil and children of God.
Hate your brother and love your brother.

Our passage starts a new section in this letter. Most commentators on John’s first letter see it as having two parts and one main reason for saying it is each part starts with the same words.

I John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

I John 3:11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Part one focused on God is light, part two focuses on God is love.
The first part emphasized holiness and renouncing the darkness of sin.
The second part will emphasize love and loving each other.

The Gospel is both light and love. Not only are we to live righteous lives, we are also to love each other. The one leads to the other.

Last text ended with I John 3:10 which sets up this transition between the two halves of John's letter.

1 John 3:10 By this it is evident who are the *children of God*, and who are the *children of the devil*: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God (that's part one of I John). Whoever does not love his brother is not of God (this points to part two of I John). By these two proofs it is evident who are the children of God and the children of the devil.

So now in this new half of his letter and its call to love one another, John again uses comparing and contrasting as he begins by giving two examples, a negative example from the life of Cain and a positive example from the life of Jesus.

After the negative example there is a command and an application.
After the positive example there is a command and an application.

And the two examples set up another contrast. In the first someone takes another person's life, in the second someone gives their own life.

I John 3:11-15, Cain.

Example.

Genesis 4:3-8 In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 6 The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

John goes back to the beginning of the Bible. This example is stunning if you think about it.

The very first person born on earth was a murderer. What does that tell you about the fall and our fallen condition and what the fall did to our hearts? It wasn't a slow gradual fall. We became sinful to the core with hearts fully capable of the worst evil.

John shows how important this message of love your brother is by starting with a very stark and strong contrast. Hating your brother is the same as murdering your brother.

Cain shows by his actions who his spiritual father is, Satan, who is also a murderer.

John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The difference between hate and love is as clear as the difference between Satan and God.

Scripture tells us Cain's actions were evil and Abel's actions were righteous. When God accepted and praised Abel's offering as righteous, Cain became jealous and angry and then out of hatred he killed his own brother.

Command, don't be surprised if world hates you.

Why does John say don't be surprised? Because the truth is most of us are surprised when the world hates us. We are good, decent people minding our own business, being good citizens. We think we should be appreciated and people should be nice to us especially when we do good.

News flash. It doesn't work that way. The world is wicked, so don't be shocked when wickedness hates goodness. Darkness hates light and truth.

This is the great compare and contrast in all of Scripture.

Cain who is the world, hates Abel who is the Christian.

Joseph was hated by his brothers.

David was hated by King Saul. He was driven by jealousy, envy, malice.

Daniel was hated by the leaders of Babylon.

Mordecai was hated by Haman.

The prophets were hated by the people.

Jesus, the holy, righteous, perfect incarnate Son of God, God in the flesh, was violently hated and crucified by the world.

Why did Cain hate Abel? Cain hated Abel because Abel's goodness exposed Cain's bad conscience. Abel's righteousness convicted Cain's unrighteousness.

The world doesn't hate us because we are good, the world doesn't hate good people. The world will admire and look up to good people.

Let's be clear the world hates Christian people, not because they are good or do good, not because they are hateful, but because they are Christians, because they are followers of Christ.

The news was full of an example of this last week. The news media found out that Vice President Mike Pence's wife, Karen, went back to work as an art teacher at a Christian School where she had worked before. This Christian School has a code of ethics that says that sex outside of monogamous marriage is sin, and is not acceptable for any of their teachers or staff.

One CNN commentator wrote that even if the school has "a right to its brand of hate," her teaching there is "deplorable" and the school's conviction about sex and marriage is "disgusting."

Jesus said it would be this way.

John 15:18-24 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of

my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

The world only loves the world, the world loves what is like it and what likes what it likes. The world hates what is unworldly. The world hates those who leave the world behind and declare allegiance to another higher authority.

John says stop being surprised when the world hates you. It is natural for the world to hate you because their father hates you and they are being like their father.

The world is under Satan's power. Satan hates Christ, hates the church, hates the Bible, hates God's standards for marriage and sexual morality.

The world hates that Christ came and exposed their sin, brought their wicked ways out into the light. The world hates because it feels condemned by us even though we don't say a word. The world has a conscience and it is bad, and anyone who exposes that will be hated.

Don't be surprised when you are hated for the same reasons.

“Your goodness unmasks the badness of the unbelievers around you. Your light illumines their darkness. Your truth exposes their error. Your holiness declares their depravity. Your life stands in judgment of them, it convicts them of their guilt, it shows them who God expects them to be” (Tim Challies).

Christlike love and sacrifice will receive Cainlike hate and contempt. They will hate you because of who you love and for being like Jesus.

Application, vss. 14-15.

Love your brother and do not hate, because hate is the same as murder. Hate is just internalized murder. When someone says they hate someone, in essence they are saying, “I don't want you around, I wish you were dead. My life would be better if you didn't exist.”

There is no middle ground here, either we are of hate or of love, of Satan or of God. Don't be like Cain. Don't return evil for evil, hate for hate, murder for murder. Don't descend to their level, don't go back to what you once were.

Jesus and John are saying that the way to live in a hostile, hate filled world is with love. Return love for hate.

3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

This is proof we are Christians, that we love each other (vs. 14).

I John 3:16-18, Christ.

Now the ultimate contrast. The ultimate sign of hate is to murder someone, the ultimate sign of love is to lay down your life for someone.

Example.

Christ is our example, we always go back to Jesus. He laid down His life for us.

Isaiah 53:3-7 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

Command, lay down life for brother.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We should love the way God loved us and be merciful the way God was merciful toward us.

Prove that you are chips off the old block. Prove that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Show there is a family resemblance between you and your Heavenly Father. Prove you are adopted and now have His nature in you. If we don't love then we aren't sons. Love is the way people born of God act.

Application, vs. 17, specific application.

When we hear those words we think of the crucifixion, that we should die for someone else. We should do what Jesus did.

But John's application goes in a different direction. Help someone in need.

This is remarkable. Christlike love is within everyone's reach. We all can do this. We are not being called to be literal martyrs. It's not a rich young ruler kind of generosity, give everything to the poor. It's not even a Zacchaeus-like generosity, four times everything.

It is a whenever you see a brother in need and you have the means to help kind of generosity.

We all have opportunity to lay down a bit of our life for another. Spouses, parents, siblings, church members, neighbors, co-workers.

Whenever we make a sacrifice. When we lay aside our needs or wants for the sake of another.

Put them first.

Seek their good.

Forgive them.

Listen to them.

Include them.

Pray for them.

Be generous, in some tangible way.

Notice the way John uses the word brother. It's singular. It would be easier if he just said brothers, you know, in a nice general sense, love the brothers. But He doesn't make it generic and just sort of out there, he says your brother. It is specific, particular,

Love for one another is to be one of the chief characteristics of the church. Are we a generous church? As a church our deacons help us be generous. Last year the deacons distributed almost \$20,000 through our Benevolence Fund. That pleases me very much. I want to be a part of a Christlike church.

Are we generous as individuals? It's safe to say some are and some aren't. Do we take genuine interest in each other and take responsibility for each other? Do we share freely with those with less?

Love is proven by what we do, not what we say. Anyone can say "I love you" but love shows itself in action. Love takes risks. Love serves. Love gives and expects nothing in return.

Expect God to give you an opportunity this week to put your love into action for the sake of Jesus.

I Thessalonians 3:12 May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,

I Peter 1:22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

I Peter 4:8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.