

The Rock: 10-04-2020

Series: Abiding love

First reading: Ephesians 1: 3-14

Title: The New -Old commandment: LOVE

Scripture: 1 John 2:7-17

Theme:

The new way of living is rooted in an old way of being. As C. S. Lewis once wrote - It's the deep magic found from before time, that when a blameless one dies in the place of another...

Well, for us the new/old commandment is rooted in love, born out through his word and our actions.

Introduction:

This past week as I was writing some personal thoughts down, my mind drifted to this series we are in here in 1 John.

Thoughts on how to understand and teach the things he gave to us, and how that works itself out in practical application. As deep and as hard as first John is, he is also intensely practical.

He breaks things down in four ways, then repeats himself, then he gives the application and assignments.

Imagining in my mind the very, very old grandpa sitting by the fire on one end of the room, with the other end packed full of all those sitting and listening intently to the one who had walked so many miles with Jesus.

I'm reminded of Spurgeon, often quoted by Begg and others, when he said: "The job of a preacher is not to teach all kinds of new things. But rather we are to remind you and ourselves of the things we must never forget."

Six times John says: "I write to you." Addressing children, fathers, young men. In other words, all of you, I don't want you to think these things don't apply to you.

Calvin said it best about this:

"...we are so perverse that few of us think that what is addressed to everyone belongs to (just) us. Old people mostly excuse themselves because they are past the age of learning; children refuse to learn, saying they are not yet old enough; the middle-aged do not pay attention because they are occupied with other things. So then, lest anyone exempt

themselves, the apostle mentions three ages, the most common divisions of human life."

-Calvin on 1 John: Pg. 37

How practical. Don't think you are excluded from the work of God because you are too young, too old and or too busy.

Rote memorization -repetition of the facts in order that we remember. Anyone knows, understands that this is the best way for people to learn and retain.

Repeat over and over again, until it becomes part of our DNA and in our memory, so much so that it becomes second nature to do. A habit, as it were.

They say it takes around 10,000 hours of practice to master anything. In other words, it takes a lot of hard work to make it look so effortless. A life time to follow Jesus, and to be conformed to him.

The Story:

This Christian life is no different - empowered by our helper (The Holy Spirit), we have access, power, and ability to live in a way that glorifies God and blesses others.

In that beautiful prayer of Jesus once again, He prays for His disciples and all who will come after them:

"But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."

-John 17:13-19 ESV

And I get a very real sense that all these years on, John remembers this moment and finds himself in much the same role.

Having walked out this Jesus life for the better part of six decades -reminding them over and over again -To stay the course, hold the line.

"Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old

commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."

-1 John 2:7-8 ESV

The New / Old Commandment. The word that you have heard.

You see, the message is always the same! But the method by which that message is conveyed will change, sometimes from one immediate generation to another.

We want to be very careful of two things:

1-That we never baptize into orthodoxy the METHOD by which the message is conveyed. Why?

Because when we do that, the method actually becomes the message, and when you change the method, some folks actually think you are watering down the truth of the Gospel, the message itself.

It's why churches fight over music style, programs, versions of the Bible, ways and styles of preaching -Far more than they do over what is actually being said.

2-To think that the Bible is only a timely type of application and message.

In other words, and as basic as I can put it, we "outgrow, become too smart and more enlightened", to adhere to such archaic teachings.

I would simply ask that you take the time to read a newspaper, watch the news and ask yourself: "Are we really getting better?" Is that what is really happening in our divine age of enlightenment and forward thinking?"

You see, to love your brother is easy to understand.

"Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

-1 John 2:9-11 ESV

In practical terms however, it is very hard to do. Now, let's be honest, as I said last week it is hard to love some people.

Admitting that is actually the first step in fixing that. Most especially here in the Church. "Oh, we are Christians, we

are supposed to love one another!" True enough. BUT DO WE?

"We're God's kids, we are one big happy family!" Really? You been to my house on a holiday? One big happy family, joyfully dysfunctional with sister and brother fighting.

For any of you in the know - I have two words for you: Clark Griswold..

To recognize the truth that if we look around, most of us would not grab a beverage with many who are gathered here today. It's ok to be frustrated and even offended with that statement.

But I stand by it because it's true.

However, you and I don't get to pick our families, do we? The Bible tells us we are brothers and sisters because of what Jesus has done -so you may not want a beverage with me -but you are stuck with me brother and sister.

Once we realize that truth, we can genuinely begin walking in the LIGHT of this commandment -to LOVE. N.T. Wright:

"The life of God's new age is revealed as the love of God's new age. All other commandments -the details of what to do and not to do -are the outflowing of this love, the love which has been newly

revealed in Jesus, the love which God now intends should be revealed in and through all those who follow Jesus."

-NTFE Pg. 141

We really don't want to find ourselves walking in the dark, as verse eleven says, do we? Not knowing where we are going.

You want to know what this looks like? Again, I say look at the wholesale collapse of dignity, lack respect and kind dialogue being displayed in this country.

Starting at the White House and all the way down to the local level. It's donkeys and elephants -so please don't send me an e-mail complaining that I'm taking sides.

Where is the love? My challenge here is that it should be shining out from us into the world, and we need to shine brightly!

Because, here's the deal:

"I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because

you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

-1 John 2:12-14 ESV

Little children, your sins are forgiven. For Jesus's sake. This is the established truth -you are the legitimate children of the King, because of Jesus.

Fathers -you know him who is from the beginning -the eternal one, God, who gave you life and breath as Paul says in his argument in Athens:

"for, 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'"

-Acts 17:28 ESV

Live accordingly, giving Him the Glory due His name.

Young men -You have overcome the evil one. Remember Calvin, John is not singling each out, but rather making sure they all understand that he is talking to them all. None are exempt.

If you are an overcomer, don't be undone!
Do not let the enemy get to you! All
things John has been saying here, just in
different ways. Repetition!

Keep yourself! Peter in his short, but
powerful letter:

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your
adversary the devil prowls around like a
roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing
that the same kinds of suffering are
being experienced by your brotherhood
throughout the world."

-1 Peter 5:8-9 ESV

Action on our parts, as we have work to
do. One of the most beautiful things is
to see, in the power of the Holy Spirit,
the work of God, by the people of God,
living out the word of God -to His glory
and the benefit of others.

It's one of the best defenses against
attack. Repeat, just in case those in the
way back of the room can't here. John
again:

Children, you know the Father, so don't
act like orphans.

Fathers, yeah, way in the back-did you
hear me? You know Him. What is a father's

task? To teach and pass on what they know, right? Pass this on to your kids.

Young men -pay attention -you are strong, God's word is in you, you are an overcomer -Get to work.

All of these things are in their possession, all because of what Jesus has done. But are useless if they do know exercise them, in action.

I'm reminded of that beautiful passage from Paul to the Ephesians, the one we looked at back in February. IN HIM: Chapter 1:3-14. I leave that for you to look at and see.

We are chosen. We have redemption. We have an inheritance. We are sealed (kept by God) and here is the key. Found in verses 13-14:

"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

-Ephesians 1:13-14 ESV

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of all these things. Our job, as His kids, is found in verses 15-17 of John's letter.

This is the part of that propitiation piece. Jesus has purchased us with His life, in order that we are no longer orphans, but children of the King.

Because of all that we have guaranteed for us, the forgiveness found in Jesus - His death, burial, resurrection -our salvation is honored and proven true when we:

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world."

-1 John 2:15-16 ESV

Now, to clarify this morning, as time grows short for us, "the world" is not "the people". They are two entirely different things and words in the Greek.

John is saying -the ways in which this fallen world operates -which are always contrary to God: Bitterness, pride, hatred, arrogance, gracelessness, injustice, racial divisions, abuse, the devaluing of human life. ALL human life, from the moment of conception in a momma's womb to the last prayer said at graveside.

This, to me is the root of much of our problem today in our time. The devaluing of the other. Every human being has value! The Church is the only place, and has the only story which actually does this.

The world does not. Please don't think for a moment it does. This is why we can't talk to one another, because the demand is that in order for you to be accepted by me, you best think, act and talk just like me -OR you are the enemy. And I will de-value you by belittling you, your intelligence, and your beliefs.

"The desires of the eyes and the pride of life". These things come from the world, not from our heavenly Father. They are the lies born in the pit of hell.

N.T. Wright is so good here:

"the world here, like the word 'flesh' when Paul uses it, means 'the world' as it places itself over against God.' The world remains God's good creation, and as such is to be enjoyed with thanksgiving..We must celebrate all the goodness of the world, all God's goodness to us within creation. But we must not worship it."

-NTFE Pg.147

It is far too easy to fall into the mindset of Heaven up there and the world right here, as though God is only right here when we ask Him to be.

No, He is right here in every one of us who are In Him. We represent him in this world by the way we live, act, serve, and yes, most especially how we LOVE.

John makes it clear what and who is going to last:

"And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

-1 John 2:17 ESV

Stay the course, little children. Hold the line, fathers. Fight the fight, young people. The Holy Spirit, your helper is in you and working for you, to empower you. All of you, at every stage of life. You are needed, you are of value and are a necessary contributor to the cause of Christ as it advances in this world.

At the end of the course, and I am sure at this late stage of his race, John could see the tape -but was still running strong right till the end!

Still teaching here -there is the prize for them that abide in my love. But I'm going to tell you from experience these

past 60 plus years, my little kids, it's not going to be the easiest of roads.

And those pressing in against you now, need to be contended with. You can never let your guard down. Because they come from outside, and frighteningly, you will find, they will also come from among you -the inside.

But that is for next week.