

WE SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 3:11-24 (Key verse 3:11)

This is the message you heard from the beginning. We should love one another.

Let's start today's message by reading the key verse together, verse 11. For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Did you know that we – as brothers and sisters in Christ - should love one another? I am sure you all knew this. For God's command to love one another is also not new to us. This is the message we have also heard from the beginning of our Christian lives..... that we should love one another.

But what exactly does it mean to.... LOVE.....one another? Is it to form a bond of affection between one another? Or perhaps brotherly or sisterly bond of camaraderie? No. In today's passage we will learn from Jesus Christ what love is. Jesus loved you and me by laying down His life for us. This action by Jesus is filled with the richness of God's love. A love with which we should love one another also. May the Lord help us this morning, to newly accept the message we heard from the beginning, to love one another! And may He help us, as a ministry, to sincerely and practically obey this command by laying down our lives for one another, as Jesus laid down His life for us. Amen.

Let's look at verse 12. (Read) Cain did not love his brother, as the LORD commanded. Instead, Cain murdered him. To better understand why he did so, let's briefly review the events recorded for us in Genesis chapter 4. Cain was Abel's older brother. And like many brothers, these two men could not be more different. For example, *when they grew up, Abel realised he had a heart for animals. So with his soft temperament, Abel became a shepherd* of livestock. Cain on the other hand was a bit more task orientated and calculative. He loved taking on projects. So he became an expert in cultivating the soil to grow all sorts of crops for his family. Nevertheless, despite their differences, they both knew the LORD. So one day, each of them presented an offering to the Lord. Abel generously offered the best and fattest portions to the LORD. So the LORD *accepted him and his offering. Cain on the other hand was calculative and stingy. Unlike his brother, Cain brought only some of the leftovers of his crops to the Lord. So the LORD did not accept Cain and his offering.* It was obviously Cain's mistake, right? Yet, instead of repenting of his sin before the LORD, Cain *became very angry* with God, because He accepted his brother's offering but not his offering. Unbeknown to Abel, this caused resentment within Cain's heart towards his brother. Now if Cain loved his brother, as God commanded, he would quickly have overcome this resentment, right?! But sadly, Cain failed to love his brother. Instead, he invited Abel to a field where Cain *attacked his brother, Abel, and murdered him.* (Gen 4:1-8) And why did he murder him? Cain hated his brother purely because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. You all know what it means to hate someone, right? Yes, it is to feel a tense dislike for someone. Wow! What a big surprise that Cain hated his brother! For Abel did absolutely nothing wrong. But look at verse 13. Apostle John tells: Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

Cain is an example of how worldly people treat God's precious children. Because of their rebellious unbelief towards the Lord, they still belong to the evil one, just like Cain. Therefore, they cannot love the children of God. They cannot love those who.....like Abel.....strive to obey the Lord and do what is right in His eyes. Instead, all they can do is to hate the innocent brothers and sisters who live in Christ..... purely because their own actions are evil and God's children's are righteous. Look at verse 14. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Because of their rebellious unbelief towards the Lord, unbelievers still belong to the evil one.....and their hearts are still spiritually trapped in sin and death. This means that even if they want to.....they are simply unable to..... firstly love the LORD..... and secondly love His children. However, the children of God are different!! By His great love.....the LORD has liberated you and me from sin and death.....and now we have passed from death to life.....This means that unlike unbelievers.....we are definitely able to firstly love the LORD and secondly love one another! No matter what our differences are.....no matter what happened or what was said between brothers and sisters in Christ.....since we passed from death to life in the LORD.....we can absolutely love one another.

This why Apostle John commands us: Do not be like Cain. Instead we should love one another. Here we need to stand still for a moment and ask the question: As a child of God, do I actually treat fellow brothers and sisters in Christ like Cain treated his brother? Sadly, the answer is.....yes we do. Although by the great love of God we have passed from death to life, our hearts are still tainted with death. Which means, we still have the ability

to be just like Cain. This explains why the LORD did not make loving one another optional, but instead commands His children to love one another. Look at verse 14b. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Here we can learn that to love one another is God's way for us to proactively stay out of death.....and away from our sinful tendencies to hate one another. Therefore, it is for our own good that we obey the Lord's command and love one another.

Sadly, just as we fail to understand the importance of loving one another.....so we also fail to understand the seriousness of hating a brother or sister. Look at verse 15. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer. Wow! I am certain you never thought of yourself as a murderer. For murderers are bad and violent people who belongs in prison; right?! However, to hate a brother or sister is to murder him or her in our hearts. Listen to how Spurgeon explains this. He says, *"Every man who hates another has the venom of murder in his veins. He may never actually take the deadly weapons into his hand and destroy life; but if he wishes that his brother were out of the way, if he would be glad if no such person existed, that feeling amounts to murder in the judgment of God."* (End quote) Here we can see just what a terrible sin it is to hate a brother or sister. Then how can we.....avoid committing this terrible sin in our hearts? Yes, by actively obeying the Lord's command to love one another.

But exactly what does it mean to love one another? There are so many ideas, songs, and movies about love that it is easy for us to misunderstand what it means to love one another. Look at verse 16a. (Read) This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. There is so much richness about God's love locked up in this one phrase: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. To unlock the true meaning of love, let's first consider who we were and how we behaved before Jesus laid down His life for us. Indeed, we were all born into a life of sin. Sadly, *we all turned away from God..... and not one of us did good, not even one.* (Rom 3:12) Our lives were filled with every kind of wickedness, sin and greed. We hated others, envied and quarreled with people around us.....deceived our loved ones..... Backstabbed friends and family and without any reason boastfully walked around in pride. We disobeyed our parents, were foolish, faithless, heartless and ruthless. (Rom 1:29-31)

Indeed, as the Holy Son of God, Jesus had every right to reject us. Because of our dirty sins..... Jesus would be justified to abandon and condemn us to eternal hell.....with Satan and His demons. But, Jesus did not do any of this. Instead, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. Here we can learn **the first aspect** of what it means to love one another. It is to treat one another in way that is contrary to what we deserve. Surely, you and I make many mistakes. Surely, we irritate and even offend one another.....whether intentionally or unintentionally. Nevertheless, look at verse 16b we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters, just like Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. This means, we should not treat our brothers or sisters harshly as they deserve.

Then does this mean we must just leave each other alone? Or simply avoid one another so we do not rub ourselves up in the wrong way. Not at all, for that is not what Jesus did with us! Instead, He physically came down from heaven to dwell among us here on earth – not to be served but to serve all kinds of needy and unpleasant people. We ought to do the same for our brothers and sisters who are not always easy to be around with. This then is **the second aspect** of what it means to love one another. It is to in humility and patience, maintain our relationships with one another by serving one another as Jesus served us. But exactly how did Jesus Christ serve you and me, we may asked? For we never met Him in the flesh? Yes, Jesus served us by laying down His life for us on the cross.....He did this for our benefit, and without us asking or deserving it. Likewise, we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters by unconditionally serving them..... for their benefit.

But we all know that our resources, time, and energy are already stretched by the business of life.....How then can we practically serve another brother or sister? This brings is **to a third aspect** of what it means to love one another. In order to save us from our sins, Jesus Christ had to physically lay down His life for us on the cross. He knew this would require great sacrifice from His side. Yet, Jesus did not hold back. Instead He trusted God to take care of Him...which God did. Likewise, we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters by sacrificing our time, our resources, and even our own plans in order to serve and help them. This indeed requires us to trust God to meet our needs, just as He met Jesus need by raising Him up from the dead.

Let's look at a **fourth aspect** of what it means to love one another. Look at verse 17. (Read) To love one another starts with us having pity (compassion) on a brother or sister in need.....and this Godly pity must then converts

into sincere action. Look at verse 18. Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. So many times we see a brother or sister in need.....whether spiritually or materially. Though we have pity on them and want to help them, we selfishly draw boundaries around ourselves..... to protect ourselves from others crossing into our personal space.....to inconvenience us, take our time, money or even mess up our plans. So as a compromise.....and to soothe our guilty conscious.....we would love our brothers and sisters with uplifting or spiritual words like *"I will pray for you"* and then simply walk away. But Apostle John urges us to not love our brother or sister with words or speech but with actions. For this was exactly what Jesus did when He laid down His life for us on the cross.

The **fifth and final aspect** of loving one another is to do so in truth. Look again at verse 18. Let us not love with words or speech but with actions..... and in truth. This means we must love in a way that builds up and encourages others in faith. If we only serve others according to our own feelings or act according to our selfish desires, then we are not really loving one another. So we must love in truth by carefully considering how to build up and encourage others in faith while we love them. For example, when we invite someone for bible study, we must be careful not to do so for selfish gain....for example to look good in the eyes of others. Nor should we do it merely because it is expected of us. Instead, we should invite someone for bible study because we want to build them and encourage them to stand strong in the faith before God. This is an example of how to love someone in truth.

Indeed, our hearts are moved when we consider these 5 aspects of Jesus' rich love by laying down His life for us. Yet at the same time, our hearts condemn us for failing to likewise love our brothers and sisters, as Jesus commanded us to. But look at verse 20. (Read) If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. When our hearts condemn us, we need to come to God in humble repentance, so He can restore our confidence in His presence. Our heart's condition is not the standard for acceptance by God. God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything - every motive, action and thought. Yet, he still loves us with self-sacrificing, unconditional, unchanging love. Knowing this puts our hearts at rest. At the same time, knowing this encourages us all the more to love one another with the same self-sacrificing, unconditional and unchanging love with which Jesus loved you and me.

In conclusion. Today we newly heard the message we heard from the beginning....that we should love one another. Our ministry consists of brothers and sisters from all walks of life. They are from different countries, different backgrounds, and different stages in life with some being first year students, others Phd. Students while others are already working. Yet, though we are so different from one another, the one thing we have in common is that we are brothers and sisters in the same family, God's family. Therefore, we must not treat one another like Cain treated his brother. Instead, we must love one another as Jesus loved us. Then not only will we remain in Jesus and He is us (24) but we will also build up a loving community of believers. Therefore, I sincerely pray that from now on each one of us love one another. Amen.