

GOD IS LIGHT: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

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Do any of you read the **Sunday Morning Herald**? This is the time that you respond with a resounding “No, because we are too busy engaged with church, of course.”

Many of you would have seen the graphic picture of Senior Constable **Bruce Mellor** splattered over the front page. He was simply conducting a routine stop of a vehicle that had been driving erratically, and was returning to his car when the two teenage boys who had been pulled over, violently attacked him with a machete. What would cause such **violence** I wonder?

You will all, no doubt, be familiar with the murder of the **Kahui twins** back in 2006 and the resulting trial. This is merely one example of the child abuse that occurs in our Nation. Statistic’s claim 12 children die each year as a result of child abuse.

Perhaps a little less severe and a lot closer to home for many of us is the very real epidemic of **broken relationships** that exist in our families, marriages, and workplaces. We cannot escape the dysfunction present in our society and lives.

It’s **here**.

It’s **real**.

It **hurts us**

And we **hurt others**.

Or perhaps we just **avoid** others. It’s just easier that way; far less complicated. Better just to stay close to those we can get on with, those who are easy to love.

Those in the church!

Those in the church?

Is the church free from this relational dysfunction? Unfortunately the evidence says no. But why?

Because the church is full of broken people like you and me!

For this reason, John's words to us this morning, are, and will always be relevant:

Let's read this morning's text from first John, chapter 2 verses 7 to 14:

"Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

"I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

"I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

"I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

"I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.

"I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

"I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

What do you think? What are your impressions of these verses? Hopefully you had a read this last week. Put your hand up if you didn't! Just kidding!

It's an interesting, almost poetic section from verses 12 to 14 at the end isn't it? We are not going to focus on this part as it does not tie in with today's message very well, and it is a very difficult wee section to make sense of. For these reasons we will primarily look at verses 7 to 11.

So a fortnight ago we looked at the beginning of this epistle written by the Apostle John. He highlighted God's incredible nature being **LIGHT!**

Chapter 1 verse 5: ***"God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all."***

We learned that to walk in the light is to live in fellowship. Both vertical fellowship with God, and horizontal fellowship with each other. Les Adam's cleverly showed me the 'cross' symbol this represents. Thanks Les.

So: **GOD IS LIGHT: LIVE IN FELLOWSHIP.**

To live in Fellowship, is to walk in the light. To live in God.

In this morning's passage, John introduces us to another important aspect of walking in the light. By keeping a command.

Keeping an old command.

And keeping a new command.

A command to **LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

Chapter 2 verse 10: ***"Whoever loves his brother lives in the light."***

So **GOD IS LIGHT:** We are to **LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

This is definitely not a new idea to any of us this morning, well I really hope that it isn't. John points out that it is an old command. As we know from Matthew chapter 22, the entire Jewish law could be summed up in a command to love both God and our neighbor.

But John says that this is also a new command, that somehow it's fresh. How is it new?

It's new because of Jesus. Verse 8: ***"Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you."*** Jesus set a new precedent of love.

A new standard.

A different way.

And we are to follow his example. His same love is to be seen through us, in our love for one another.

Jesus says this himself in John's gospel, chapter 13, verse 34: ***"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."***

Only a verse before that, he is telling his disciples that he is soon to depart. That he is no longer going to be with them, at least not physically; that in a very real sense, their love for one another is a manifestation of Jesus love for all.

So this is my first point this morning:

1. To LOVE ONE ANOTHER is to WALK AS JESUS WALKED!

John makes this point earlier in verse 6 of the second chapter, if to 'live in him or walk in the light is to love one another,' then ***"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."***

No problem! Just have to walk as Jesus did. Live as Jesus lived. Be like Jesus, who was perfect.

Who was God incarnate.

This is a very tough call, and I don't think we can ever say we've made it.

But let's get practical. How did Jesus love?

We all know the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery in John chapter 8. When Jesus was asked if they should stone her for her sin according to the law, he replied by saying: ***"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."***

Of course they all make tracks and it is just her and Jesus left behind. Jesus who was **without sin**. Who was well within the law to cast the first stone.

But he didn't.

He was not the first to throw a stone; he was the first to show her grace.

To love as Jesus loved, is to be people of grace, not stones!

To love as Jesus loved, is also to grieve with those who are grieving. To cry with those who are crying.

Do you know the shortest verse in the bible? It's found in the book of John also, chapter 11 verse 35: "**Jesus wept.**"

The following verse: "**Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him."**"

Lazarus, they were referring to. Lazarus had died, and though Jesus knew that he would soon be alive and walking again, he cried all the same. His heart was grieved. He was saddened by pain Lazarus' death had caused.

Jesus wore his love on his sleeve, not that he would have had a sleeve.

He allowed himself to enter into the pain and suffering of humanity, because he wanted to show us how much he loves us. This is what it is to be incarnational!

We must follow his example.

It's not easy to trudge through the thick mud with others, but it sure is easier together. Jesus knew this.

We must be like Jesus!

I wonder where you sit in this regard?

How would you rate yourself on the Jesus-o-meter?

Perhaps some you need to be encouraged.

I know many of you have lived many years of faithful service to Christ, and generous love towards others. Rachel and I have been recipients of this generous love already. Thank you!

May you continue to abound in the Love of Christ Jesus toward others!

Perhaps some you need to be challenged.

Perhaps you're not so good exercising your grace muscles. Perhaps you like me in that you are far too quick to pick your stone up off the ground, and ready your throw.

If there is something we humans are good at, it is making our mind up about someone before we even really know them. This literally happens in a matter of split seconds.

Perhaps you're not very good at journeying with other people through their pain.

"I'm just not an emotional guy. I leave that sort of stuff for the people who are good at it. That's the pastor's job right?"

Absolutely, but he's only one man! The best pastoral care plan is one where all people look after all peoples! We all have a part to play.

We can't do any of this alone. We need the help of the Holy Spirit, ever-present in our lives.

May you continue to grow in the love of Christ Jesus toward others!

LOVE ONE ANOTHER: WALK AS JESUS WALKED. This was my first point. The second point reveals the reason for the first.

2. To LOVE ONE ANOTHER is to WALK IN CONTRAST.

To love one another as Jesus loved us is to walk in stark contrast to this dark world in which we live.

John makes this comparison with darkness twice in today's section of text. 2:9:

"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness." And verse 11: ***"But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and***

walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.”

Failure to love, results in a failure of direction.

Someone who does not love is someone who simply does not know where he is going. So he wanders around aimlessly and doesn't realize the pain he causes others.

Tony Anthony was one of these someone's. Have you heard of him? I've just been reading his autobiography. A book called 'Taming the Tiger.' Fascinating stuff! I recommend it!

Tony's mother is Chinese and his father is British. When Tony was only 6 years old, his parents willingly abandoned him to his Grandfather who took him to China to live. His Grandfather was a master in Kung Fu and raised him the art by means of a violent, grueling and highly disciplined lifestyle, amongst strong Buddhist spirituality. Tony became an expert. His favourite Kung Fu style was that of the White Tiger. He fought in many competitions and eventually went on to win the International Kung Fu Championship title three years in a row. His International rapport quickly led him into the personal protection service as a bodyguard. Again he was very successful. Tony had seemingly everything he could ever want: the fame; the skills; the strength; the money; the adventurous career; and even the woman of his dreams. However it didn't satisfy, and it didn't last. His female partner was tragically killed in a car accident, and this proved to be the last straw for Tony. He started making some very bad decisions which eventually led him into prison. The darkness he describes there is very real. Violence, pain, loneliness, immorality and suffering of the worst kind. Not an ounce of light in the entire place until an outsider started visiting Tony and eventually led him into the light. What followed was a mini revival in the prison. Many became followers of Jesus. Why? Because they practiced a different, much more attractive way. A way of love. A way of reconciliation. A way that didn't repay violence with violence. But a way of love for one another. The way of Jesus.

We looked earlier at John 13:34 where Jesus commands us to love one another as he has loved us, but he goes on to say straight after this in verse 35: ***“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”***

Our love for one another reveals our allegiance to our King. It is an extremely effective means of evangelism. It discloses the name written on our hearts, and entices others join the party.

To LOVE ONE ANOTHER is to WALK IN CONTRAST, because there is a solution to the brokenness, pain, suffering and violence that surrounds us.

There is a solution to the impending darkness.

It's light!

Christ's light!

2:8: ***“it's truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.”***

It's already shining church!

We're already shining.

Christ is already shining through us.

The darkness **cannot** and **never will** overcome the light.

But we must continue to live in the light.

We must continue to love one another.

We must continue to love as Jesus loved.

GOD IS LIGHT: LOVE ONE ANOTHER.