

God is Love: Love One Another:

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We were all lined up, standing to attention side by side. There was hardly much left of us, we were so thin and malnourished. As POW's we were treated like animals and this day was no different.

They had caught Major Campbell and his men trying to escape last night, and they intended on making a very strong message to us all that:

THIS WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE!

All five men had been lined up.

Four had been shot.

Major Campbell was the last.

No one would have missed him too much. He had done nothing but cause trouble and strife since he arrived. He had been encouraging all the prisoners to rebel; to resist everything that was asked of them. He had tried to get off working simply because he was an officer.

Good riddance to him!

"WAIT!" a voice yelled.

It was Dusty's. What was he doing? Keep your mouth shut or you'll get yourself in trouble.

"Wait, please don't kill him . . . kill **me** instead."

WHAT WAS HE THINKING??? **Dusty you fool!** Campbell's life is not worth more than your own!

Dusty was the nicest man in the entire camp. But he was more than just nice. He was something else. He had been running classes on Shakespeare and Philosophy, and he had been teaching people about this Jesus character. Teaching some sort of **way**. A way of forgiveness and love rather than the 'eye for an eye' approach that Campbell was advocating. No one wanted Dusty to die.

It didn't matter what we wanted.

The guards, confused, perplexed and curiously pleased by this offer decided to do more than just shoot Dusty. They decided to give him the sort of death his 'leader' had.

They nailed him to a cross in front of us all and **left him to die.**

Let's turn to our text this morning from first John. Reading from chapter 3:11-24.

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: To believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

So let's recap again. It's always good to remember where we've come from and to where we are heading.

Last week we talked about being adopted in the family of divinity as **Children of God.** This requires that we make an effort to be like our father, by being **children of righteousness.**

The week before that, we made a New Year resolution as a church to: **Remain in the Truth,** and to **remain in the Spirit.** That the Holy Spirit would see us through all and any difficulty we face.

Before that we had been looking at God's nature being **light.**

Us as his followers, are called to **live in the light**. Practically speaking this means: Living in **fellowship**, with God and one another. And;
Loving one another.

To **Love one another** was to **walk as Jesus walked**; showing the same grace, mercy, and care that he showed.

It was also to **walk in contrast** to those in the world around us, thereby being an example of God's love.

This morning we are going to look again at this command to **love one another**, but from a different angle.

We are going to look at the way **JESUS LOVED!**

You see John gives us a definition of what love is in 3:16, he says: ***This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.***

Jesus Christ laid down his life for **us**.

Jesus Christ laid down his life for **you and me**.

Jesus Christ laid down his life for **Kathleen Old**.

Jesus Christ laid down his life for **Murray Robertson, and for Juene Simmons**.

But what does it mean to **lay down** one's life for another?

How are we to **follow Jesus** in this manner of love for one another?

My first point is that we are to **LOVE AT GREAT COST!**

LOVE AT A GREAT COST to ourselves.

Because this is what Jesus did! And we are to reflect his image.

John begins by telling us once again to **love one another** in 3:11. This is not the first time he encourages such behavior in his letter. We know this from earlier in the second chapter where he made the same point. Verse 10:

Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

But here he does not give very specific teaching as to what it is to love one's brother. However after exhorting us to love one another in the 3rd chapter, he moves on to illustrate a negative example of what it is not to love one another.

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother.

Are you familiar with the Cain and Abel story? I have little doubt that most of you will be, but for those that are not, let's take a look:

Genesis Chapter 4:

Eve gives birth to Cain and Abel. Cain is the oldest brother.

Cain is the gardener and Abel is the farmer. Both make an offering to the Lord.

Cain some fruit. Abel some fat from an animal.

God is happy with Abel's but not with Cain's. **Why?** We are not quite sure.

Whatever the reason, Cain gets insanely jealous of his brother. So much so that he decides to take him out into the field and knock him over the head with his plowing hoe, or some such thing.

Abel is dead!

Cain is responsible!

Murder entered the world as we know it at this point in time.

Why did Cain do it? John tells us in 3:12: ***Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.***

Cain couldn't stand that his brother was **better than him.**

Cain couldn't stand that his brother was **'Mr. righteous.'**

Cain was angry at Abel for **doing good.**

Have you ever experienced these feelings **from** someone else?

Have you ever experienced these feelings **toward** someone else?

I know I've had a **'Cain-like'** attitude before.

I recall getting angry and spiteful towards a fellow New Zealand student while we were training in Canada to become Navigators.

She was **smarter** than me.

She was **better** than me.

She was **nicer** than me.

She was **more favored** than me.

And I couldn't stand it!

To my shame I tried to exercise dominance over her at one point.

By making her feel smaller, I tried to make myself bigger.

I hurt her.

It's easy to **say to someone** that we love them.

It's also easy to **show love** by giving to someone when it's at **little or no** cost to us.

But it's **so much harder** to show love by giving at a **great cost** ourselves.

This is the love Jesus gave!

There are extreme cases where someone is in a position to physically give their life for another. Like Dusty did for Major Campbell.

But these cases are rare.

However the command to lay down one's life for another still remains. In fact don't you think that **it is harder to continue to lay down your life on a daily basis, than it is to give it up completely at one moment?**

How can we love each other better as a community of Jesus followers?

What are we holding onto that would better be given away in love?

What needs are not being met in this congregation because we are not **loving at great cost?**

What needs are not being met in this community of Milford because we are not **loving at great cost?**

To **lay down one's life** is to **LOVE AT GREAT COST.**

This was point one.

The second point is simply meant to encourage us to **love at great cost.**

Because such love is **LOVE OF GREAT GAIN!**

Love of great gain!

What do I mean by this?

Am I suggesting that we **Love at a cost**, so we can receive **great gain?**
NO!

Great gain is the RESULT of such love, not the PURPOSE!

What I'm getting at is again the example that is set by Jesus.

By Jesus laying down his life for us, by his death on the cross, he did **MORE** than just **display** the most **amazing love** the cosmos has ever known;

He **achieved** the most **significant thing** the cosmos has ever known.

Because he rose again to life, because he was victorious over death, we can now be in relationship with our magnificent creator!

We can live in his victory, and inherit a share of his glory!

The immense actions of his love changed the face of this earth; changed religion as we know it.

This is what Paul describes as the **culmination of the ages** in 1 Corinthians 10:11.

Jesus love for us, displayed by his death at Calvary, was great gain for us, his beloved!

This is the result of such self-sacrificial love: **GREAT GAIN for the recipient.**

This is a DIVINE LOVE that we must show to others!

This is a DIVINE LOVE that transforms lives!

This is a DIVINE LOVE that leaves a lasting mark on its recipient!

This DIVINE LOVE must be characteristic of this church.

This is what John was pushing for.

But what's interesting is that John does not specifically state who this **divine love** is intended for.

Is this sort of love only to be shown to **those in the church**?

Or is it to be shown to **everyone**?

Surely John didn't intend for his community to be showing this kind of love to those who have caused all the recent trouble; those who had been teaching false truth, denying the deity of Jesus and claiming to be without sin; those who were no longer attending the community?

John however **doesn't delineate**.

And most commentators agree that he doesn't for a reason.

Because **such love knows no bounds**.

Such love is not to be restricted to those who are easy to love; those who we want to love.

Such love is to be characteristic of our nature as children of God.

Such love is to be given to **our employer**, who drives us up the wall.

Such love is to be given to **our family member** whom we've never really gotten on with.

Such love is to be given to **our neighbour** who is always rude to us.

Such love is to be extended **to ALL**.

Because such love is the **divine love** of our father.

A divine love that is at **great cost** from the giver, and is of **great gain** to the receiver!

What **POWERFUL** love that is.

That's a love that this world is not so familiar with.

A love that is not cheap, fleeting, temporary, self centered and based purely on attraction.

A DIVING LOVE!

John also gives us an **assurance** in these verses. A **confidence** that we can have before God. Not only that but an assurance that we will receive what we ask for in prayer if:

obey his commands and
do what pleases him.

Not that God is a Genie who will give us whatever we ask for, but that if we are **living in his commands**, and are **doing what pleases him**, then our natures are reflecting that of God's, and our prayers are more in line with his will.

And what were these **commands** that we must obey?

Again John spells it out in verse 23: ***And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.***

Believe in Jesus and

Love one another!

Believe in Jesus and love with a love that is of **great cost** to the giver for **great gain** to the receiver.

A love that **lays down one's life for another.**

This is the sort of love that Dusty showed to those around him in that POW camp.

The lives of the men there were impacted and changed by his love for them.

Many of you may be familiar with the story.

The story I told in the beginning was taken from a movie called: **To end all Wars.**

It was based on the autobiography of a man named Ernest Gordon.

Ernest was a agnostic when he was put in the POW camp. But it was there that he experienced the self-sacrificial love of two men:

Dusty Miller and

Dinty Moore.

Ernest had been placed in the '**Death Ward.**'

No one was expected to survive in the **death ward.**

But Ernest was cared for by Dusty and Dinty, 24 hours around the clock.

Ernest's life was changed forever.

He survived the death ward as well as the POW camp, and went on to become a Presbyterian Dean at the Chapel at Princeton University.

Ernest later discovered that both Dusty and Dinty had been killed in the POW camps. Dusty was executed by a guard who was frustrated with his **sense of calm in the face of hardship.**

It was love like Dusty's and Dinty's that John is encouraging us towards.

To lay down our lives for each other as Jesus did for us.

A love at GREAT COST! And;

A love of GREAT GAIN!

Pray.