

Where There is Love There is Life

1 John 3:10-24

Grace Church 12-12-10

Introduction:

I was watching the news on Friday morning and there was a story about an Elvis impersonator who just this past week married his sweetheart during a marathon. His name is Claudio Palma, he is a medical doctor in real life. At mile two they stopped and had the ceremony. Then they finished the race, it was actually a half marathon. After the race they went to a restaurant to celebrate and eat. While eating his buffalo burger he suddenly hears his wife yell "my husband is a doctor". He turned to see a woman lying in the floor. He rushed to her side, assessed the situation, assessed she did not have a pulse and was not breathing and then performed mouth to mouth resuscitation. When she regained consciousness she was quite startled and a bit confused. The next day this lady tells the doctor's wife that when she woke up she was looking into the face of Elvis and her first thought was that Elvis was in heaven. She seems to have recovered.

Besides being a heartwarming story of rescue what really caught my attention in the news interview was what the doctor said. Several times he used the phrase "I assessed the situation". Why was he assessing the situation? He was determining if there were any signs of life. When there was not he took appropriate action.

Now what does this story have to do with our worship in the Word from 1 John? Let me read the text for us before answering that question. Listen for key words which indicate life. Would you stand with me please? (Read 1 John 3:10-24)

Notice how many times the word "heart" is used. Five times we find it in this section of Scripture. Our heart has everything to do with physical life and spiritual life.

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV)

9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Ephesians 3:17 (ESV)

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

Hebrews 10:22 (ESV)

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Philippians 4:7 (ESV)

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Luke 8:15 (ESV)

15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Notice what comes out of this heart transformation that is brought about because of saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is a new life which produces fruit.

Now, hold that thought for a minute. As I was preparing for today the thought occurred to me how we label people according to their personalities. There is a particular personality survey that labels us as different animals. The animals are beaver, lion, otter and golden retriever. Well I am convinced the Apostle John must be a zebra. What is the predominate feature of a zebra? It is their stripes isn't it? I have never seen a zebra with anything but black or white stripes. I have never observed any gray shades at all.

Do you know any zebras? I do. You may be a zebra yourself. Well, John is a zebra. He is the king of contrast. There are no off color hues for him when it comes to theology and our relationship with God. Here are a few of the contrasts he makes in this short letter.

Light/Darkness	1:5
Death/Life	3:14
Truth/Error	4:6
God/Devil	3:8

Well this morning the contrast is between Love and Hate. As a spiritual doctor he is saying we can assess our situation by examining the heart to see if there are any signs of life.

Which brings us to the title of our study this morning; "Where There is Love There is Life".

Key Thought: Love is an indication of life.

How do we know if we have passed from death into life?

1 John 3:14 (ESV)

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

If a spiritual doctor were to "assess" your situation, would there be enough evidence to declare life is present or would there have to be resuscitation? Perhaps we can use that image this morning in our worship in the Word.

As with any study of the Word you should look for repetitive words. The word heart is used five times in four verses. It is the only time it is used in this letter.

1 John 3:17 (ESV)

17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

1 John 3:19 (ESV)

19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;

Death and life are dependent upon the condition of the heart. As we look at this passage we are given two examples of the heart. One is a heart of hate the other a heart of love.

I. The heart controlled by hate severs. (vv. 12-15)

Hate is to our spiritual hearts as plaque is to the physical heart. It causes blockages and is deadly.

John uses Cain as an illustration of a heart controlled by hate that severs. It not only severs the life of Abel but it severs ties with parents and a personal relationship with God. Let's take a few minutes and examine the events surrounding the taking of Abel's life.

Why did Cain commit murder?

1 John 3:12 (ESV)

12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

Have you been the recipient of another's hate? John urges us not to be surprised if we are hated by the world. It is not stated but with his use of contrast it is correct to say that we should be surprised if we are hated by another Christian. There are other adjectives that could be used to describe this heart. It would be; angry, bitter, jealousy and so on.

You say I would never commit murder. Why not? Afraid of being caught and the punishment that follows. Why is murder such an awful offense? Murder is an attempt to destroy the image of God in an individual.

Genesis 9:6 (ESV)

6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

Murder is the unlawful killing of a human being by another. Deliberately taking the life of a human being usurps the authority that belongs to God. The prohibition against murder is a hedge to protect human dignity. The OT (Gen. 9:6) prescribed that a murderer should be prepared to forfeit his own life.

John states there is no difference between a murderer and a hater.

1 John 3:15 (ESV)

15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

If love is an indication of life, then hate is an indication of death. The opposite of eternal life is eternal death. Anyway you want to slice it, death is separation from God.

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount helps us understand why hate and murder are connected.

Jesus removed the concept of murder from a physical act to the intention of one's heart (Matt. 5:21-22). According to Jesus, murder really begins when one loses respect for another human being. Spitting in the face of another, looking with contempt upon another, or unleashing one's anger are signs that a murderous spirit is present. Jesus forces us to move to the spirit behind the prohibition of murder. We are compelled to do all that we can do to protect the life of our neighbor and help it flourish. The writer of 1 John pushed Jesus' teaching to its ultimate: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him"

What was a precursor to Cain murdering Abel?

Genesis 4:4-8 (ESV)

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 for 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.

What should a believer do when anger begins to well up in his/her heart? What should we do when we are the recipient of someone's hate?

Matthew 5:23-24 (ESV)

23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Any season is a good time to make things right with others. Yet, in some way it may be especially relevant to this holiday season. We will gather with family and friends and those who are estranged from us. I encourage you to make every effort possible to right any wrongs, to arrest any anger and to remove any hate that may be choking the very life out of your heart. You are not responsible for the response to your efforts of reconciliation. You are however responsible to make every effort to live at peace.

II. The heart controlled by love serves. (vv. 16-18)

How are we doing so far? As you assess the situation, are there any signs of life? There are things that the heart filled with the love of God does.

How can we experience this love?

1 John 3:16 (ESV)

16 By this we know (γίνωσκω) love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

I am sure it is only coincidence but this is so similar to John 3:16 "for God so loved the world that He gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The heart that is controlled by love must first experience the love of God through forgiveness.

Many of you know the name D. L. Moody. He was a well known preacher/evangelist in the mid 1800's. I have read somewhere that Moody was not the most skilled at using the English language. That is, he was not always grammatically correct, which I suppose puts me in good company. Ray Stedman, a former teacher of mine at Dallas Seminary, told the story of meeting a man out in Virginia who came to Christ through the ministry of Moody. Here is how Stedman tells it.

Years ago, in Virginia, I met an old man who was the rector of an Episcopal church. He had been converted in D. L. Moody's meetings in Cambridge, England. When Moody came to the center of English culture and education in Cambridge, the students were very much in rebellion against him. They felt he was a backwoods American

who could not even speak the English language properly -- and he couldn't! They were affronted by the idea that this coarse, crude, vulgar American should be asked to speak to the cultured students of Cambridge. The man I met in Virginia was one of those students opposed to Moody. A band of them had agreed that, when the meeting began, they would break it up with catcalls, hooting, and mockery, and refuse to allow Moody to continue with his message. Sounds rather up to date, does it not? But when the meeting began, his associate, Ira Sankey, sang a beautiful number that greatly moved the hearts of those students. As soon as the song ended, Moody strode to the front of the platform and, in his characteristic blunt fashion began, "**Young gentlemen, don't ever let anybody tell you that God don't love you, for he do.**" It arrested them. They were so startled by this ungrammatical beginning that they all paid attention. Again he came back to the theme and said, "**Don't ever let anybody tell you that God don't love you, for he do.**" This student said that as he left the meeting that phrase ran again and again through his mind and he thought to himself, "Why do I fight a God who loves me? Why should I be in rebellion to such a God?" Later that day he sought out D. L. Moody, and Moody led him to Christ. As he told me that story, he looked back across the years to recall the time when he first came to realize the love of God.

There are no two forces on earth any stronger than hate and love. You do not have to watch the news long or read the headlines very far before you are confronted with the turmoil around the world that is motivated by hatred of one person or people for another. At the same time you will find examples of individuals placing themselves in harms way to help those less fortunate, many are motivated by love.

There is a love which God places in the Christian's heart that is far beyond any emotion we could conjure up. Does this mean the atheist or Buddhist cannot love? No, it does not mean the atheist does not love their children, for they do. Does the love that the Christian experiences mean those outside of being a follower of Christ do not have love and compassion for those who are suffering around the world. No, it does not. For even the love which the Buddhist or atheist feels towards another is a result of having been created in the image of God.

However, like everything else about us humans, when we fell into sin because of the actions of Adam and Eve, that ability to love was fractured. The bible does not claim that Christians have a monopoly on love. But it does put forth the truth that the highest quality of love possible begins to flow only in the Christian experience. There is a reason for this.

The Apostle John is a good example of this. He and his brother James were known as the "sons of thunder". This was a nickname Jesus gave to them because of their actions.

There was an occasion where a village would not allow Christ and his disciple to enter. In response James and John said to Jesus "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Luke 9:54

Once, in an effort to preempt the other disciples, they requested of Christ to give them high positions in His coming kingdom by allowing them to be seated on his right and left. These are positions of authority. When the other disciples heard of their request they were incensed at them. Jesus took the opportunity to teach them a valuable lesson.

Mark 10:42-45 (ESV)

42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But **whoever would be great among you must be your servant,** 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the **Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,** and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Sounds very similar to what John is telling us in chapter three.

1 John 3:16 (ESV)

16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

However, to this "son of thunder" who was willing to obliterate an entire village with a fire bomb, something happened. The love of God changed his heart. As it says in verse nine "for God's seed took up residence and he could no longer keep on sinning". If we are going to love others and serve them as Christ did we need to have experienced the love of Christ. Listen to what God tells us about this love and what it does for our hearts. Remember we are assessing ourselves to determine if there are signs of life.

John 3:16 (ESV)

For God So Loved the World

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:5 (ESV)

5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

1 John 3:9 (ESV)

9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Romans 10:9-10 (ESV)

9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Have you had that experience, having the love of God poured into your heart? Have you confessed with your mouth and believed in your heart the message concerning Christ. For those who do, the result is forgiveness of sin, the granting of eternal life and the love of God residing in you which changes your outlook on life. It enables you to do what we are commanded to do here in 1 John.

Some of you are familiar with the name Payne Stewart.



Payne was a player on the PGA golf tour. He died in a plane crash that sent shockwaves around the world. On October 25, 1999, a small plane plummeted to the ground near Mina, South Dakota, killing everyone aboard. Somehow the cabin had lost pressure and everyone on board lost consciousness. Since the plane was on autopilot the plane simply flew until it ran out of fuel and crashed in a corn field.

I am pretty passionate about golf and at the time followed it very closely. Payne was a very rambunctious person.

When he accepted the trophy after winning the US Open, just a few months earlier, to the surprise of many he made this statement;

"First of all, I have to give thanks to the Lord. If it weren't for the faith that I have in him, I wouldn't have been able to have the faith that I had in myself on the golf course."

It did not surprise me even though I did not know where he stood spiritually. For perhaps 10 months prior to his death I observed via the television a significant change in his demeanor.

Stewart's wife, Tracey, recalls,

"Many people were amazed at how Payne handled losing the 1998 U.S. Open and winning the 1999 Open with equal measures of grace. Members of the press, and some of his fellow competitors, were intrigued. Something was different about Payne Stewart. Oh, sure, he was still Payne--spontaneous, outspoken, extremely confident, and always wearing his emotions on his sleeve. He still loved a good party, and he'd still tell you what he thought about a subject if you asked him--or even if you didn't. He still worked hard, played hard, and loved passionately. Yet people who knew Payne well recognized that he had changed somehow for the better. He possessed a deeper, unusual sense of peace... a peace that hadn't always been there."

Paul Azinger, a fellow golfer, said this at the memorial service.

Payne Stewart loved life and loved people. During this past year, everyone who knew Payne Stewart saw a dramatic change in his life. They saw in Payne what the Bible calls a 'peace which passes all understanding.' **Only God can do that because only God can change a heart...."**

There is no way for you and me to complete the mission we find here in this text unless God has changed our hearts.

Have you experienced the life changing impact of expressing saving faith in Jesus Christ?

1 John 3:17-18 (ESV)

17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Such love is a sign of new life which has come about because there has been a heart change. This brings us to our "so what" this morning.

So What?

Love is the sign there is life.

John 13:35 (ESV)

35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

How are you doing in showing that love? Is it only in words or talk or is it translating itself into actions and deeds? There is no greater time than right now to determine with God's help that you will purposefully look for opportunities to engage those within your oikos through acts of service.

At this particular time of the year we need the love of Christ flowing through us as never before. We likely will be in close contact with those whom we don't particularly like to be around. Do everything you can to reconcile those relationships. Look for ways to serve them.

Jesus said Luke 6:32 (ESV)

"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

Christians are called by God to set a different standard. I ran across a heartwarming story this week of someone who experienced the love of God in a life changing way and then began to love those whom had hated him. Perhaps you have heard the name Jacob DeShazer. On 7 December 1941, while on KP duty at a U.S. Army base in Oregon, DeShazer heard news of the attack on Pearl Harbor over the radio. He became enraged, shouting: "The Japs

are going to have to pay for this!" Thus began an intense hatred for the Japanese.

He was one of "Doolittle's Raiders" which flew a bombing raid into Japan. He was the bombardier in B-25 #16 on that raid. This raid did not provide a round trip ticket in that none of the planes had enough fuel to make it back to base. Deshazer parachuted out and was captured by the Japanese and spent 42 months in a POW camp, 34 of which were in solitary confinement.

Listen to this with me please. The visual quality is not all that great but the testimony of love is out of this world.

Play DeShazer video.