

Sermon Series: Where the Lover Meets the Road

“Two Important Love Tests”

Sunday, July 10, 2022

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There are important tests in life that we must pass. E.g., if we want to get through school, we have tests to take, and this is good because such tests help us to stay sharp on the subject— like when I was in elementary school, my teacher said before the year was over we would have a big test on multiplication, so at night as I was going to sleep I was going over my multiplication tables up to 12; fortunately for me, the teacher must have forgotten about this year-end test, because we never had it. But the fear of the test helped me to know my multiplication tables better! There are other tests one must take in life, such as in driving. E.g., Kaylor has some recent experience in taking a driver’s test, and I would like to ask her a couple of questions— what is the driving test like to get your license? And, how does it feel to have your driver’s license? In today’s text, we will see two important tests that will be helpful for us to be sure we are prepared to follow Jesus.

1 John 3:11-18 (p. 240)

CONTEXT: John has just emphasized the importance of being not a child of the devil, but rather a child of God. He continues to let us know one of the most important parts of being a child of God.

READ v 11. “John opens with a programmatic statement of how the believer is to live: love the other. Cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12,17.” From the time of Jesus’ ministry the disciples knew a central aspect of following Jesus— love for one another in a radical, Jesus-imitating way. Jesus said in John 13:34, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” Indeed, John himself reminds his readers of this in 1 John 2:9-10, “Whoever says, ‘I am in the light,’ while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.” We may want to ask who is our brother or sister whom we are to love? We need to be careful here, lest we fall into the trap of the lawyer before Jesus in Luke 10:29 when, after Jesus cited the second greatest commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself”, asked, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus then gave him the parable of the Good Samaritan, the implication being we are to love not just those like us but even those whom we don’t like— those within our circle of friends and those without. Both believer and non-believer. But John is writing for a church which is apparently struggling with showing love for one another, and if there is any place love should be shown it should be within the Body of Christ. Have you ever seen a lack of love in the Body of Christ? E.g., I recall one church I served in the youth group, and there was a spirit of competition and criticism amongst the group, that made me feel at times like I had to put up my guard as I arrived at youth events— I did not feel welcome and appreciated, but at times concerned about what they were saying behind my back because I heard what was being said behind other people’s backs.

That is not how the Body of Christ is to be. Apparently something like this was happening in the church John knew. Apparently there were also factions over doctrine— a spiritual elitist group who denied the physical, bodily resurrection in favor of a spiritual resurrection (cf. 1 John 1:1-4; 2:18-25).

READ vv 12-15. “The first test is whether we are into murder in a literal and non-literal way. Cf. Genesis 4:1-17; Matthew 5:21-26.” John lived in a world that knew hatred and murder. We can read about the emperors Gaius Caligula (37-41 AD) who was assassinated and Nero (54-68 AD) who was forced to commit suicide. We know of the hundreds of crucifixions after the failed overthrow of the Romans in Jerusalem in 70 AD. Indeed, we know of the cheapness of human life and the violent murders of others, as we see the murder rate in New Orleans is up from last year— in 2021 it was 218, and in 2022 so far by mid-May we have surpassed 100 murders. We are on pace to be the murder capital of the U.S. with 72 murders per 100,000, with Birmingham, AL being in second with 59 per 100,000 (“‘This is a crisis’: New Orleans murder rate per capital pacing highest in U.S.”, June 17, 2022 online article from WVUE by David Jones). On April 27, 2022 the Metropolitan Crime Commission stated that we are up 46% in murder rate compared to 2021. We are to be in stark contrast from the world. In fact in v 13 John makes this clear by ending this verse with the word “world” and beginning v 14 with the emphatic “we” in the original language. Jesus made it clear, as John does here, that murder can be non-literal with the way we speak to one another. In Matthew 5:22 Jesus said, “‘But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.’” So a real test of whether we love as Jesus calls us to do so is whether we murder people with our words, whether we injure them severely with our comments. E.g., I recall hearing a Mother talk to her adult son after he

gave a talk at a church service and in front of others when someone praised him she said, “You forgot to say what you were supposed to say!” I looked at him and I could see a slight jolt in his expression— her words cut him. As we grow into maturity we learn how to be gracious in our words and where we speak our words— not criticism before others, which can be humiliating— and to be encouraging. And even say nothing at times. E.g., I recall someone who had been hurt by a family member and the way he spoke about him was that his family member had hurt him, and he acknowledged that, but said also that he did not want to put him down, and he needed to forgive him.

READ vv 16-18. “The second love test is whether we are into me-me-me in a concrete and non-concrete way. Cf. Deuteronomy 15:7-11; James 2:11-17.” We are to love in a practical way as well, as was told in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 15:7-8, “If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need whatever it may be.” This is continued in the New Testament where James 2:14-17 says, “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” E.g., I am reminded about an opinion piece article in last Sunday's *Times Picayune* (July 3, 2022, 7B, “Abortion opponents now have more work to do”) by Kim Carver, senior vice-president at Gulf Coast Bank, who is a believer and gave this word of advice to Christians now that *Roe v Wade* has been overturned— that Christians need to be supporting families and children who are vulnerable and poor and marginalized, and we need more people to be

involved as foster families for children who are especially vulnerable. He ends his piece by saying, “I hope the future is one where those who have staked out that ground as being pro-life have a chance to prove it. And I think it has to be done with great grace and love and compassion, because these are things are had and messy. It’s easy to protest o picket and say we think Roe v. Wade should be overturned. It’s hard work to do the other. It’s the deep end of the pools.” E.g., I heard that Abby Johnson, whose real-life story was told in the movie “Unplanned”, that there are about four pro-life clinics to every one abortion clinic in the U.S., and that once a woman came in who had an unwanted pregnancy and she needed a car, and in about 45 minutes they had raised \$10,000 for her to buy a car!

“Have we passed the tests? Please note the key helps in vv 16-17.” We know how to pass tests in school, and driving tests. But have we passed these two love tests— have we been murders, and have we been into me-me-me? Before we get down on ourselves for what we have not done or for what we have done, let u look to our Savior. He has provided the role model. READ vv 16-17 again. His love will abide in us and what will happen is that He will make us want to help. It is appears pure drudgery, then we need our hearts warmed by the love of the Lord, and remember what He has done for us— clearly amazing love!