



Sermon Title: LIT Part 6 - Love as Jesus Loves (1 John 2:7-11)

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Share about an item that has sentimental value to you (e.g. a photograph, a piece of jewelry, a keepsake from traveling, etc.).
2. Have you ever had one of the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) wearables? Did it encourage you to be more like Jesus?
3. *Read 1 John 2:7-11.* Have you experienced love from your church community? How does this compare to love you have received from those who are not part of the church?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Pastor Henry states that the 'old commandment' in these verses refers to the 'great commandment' Jesus gave in Matthew 22:36-40. Have someone read these verses.
How do all the Law and the Prophets hang on the great commandment?
2. In verse 7 of our scripture (1 John 2), John states he is not writing a new command but an old one. But then in verse 8 he goes on to say that indeed he *is* writing them a new command. Discuss how this is a new perspective instead of a contradiction.
3. In 1 John 2:9-11, John uses some pretty strong language. 'Hate' is a strong term, and as Pastor Henry points out, many of us wouldn't say that we 'hate' anyone.
What euphemisms do we use to describe our negative attitudes/behaviours toward others? When John talks about loving/hating, to whom is he referring?
4. One of the Greek terms that we translate as 'love' is *agape*: A decision to love someone — extending grace, goodwill and blessing, and to treat them as if you did like them even if they don't deserve it.
What comes to mind when you think of Jesus loving his enemies?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. Pastor Henry taught that the first step to loving our enemies is to acknowledge who they are. What were some of the examples Pastor Henry gave?
2. With God's help, how can you demonstrate his love to people in your life who may be 'enemies'? (Luke 6:27-28)

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Pastor Henry said, "A litmus test that you've truly experienced the love and grace of God in your life is a willingness to extend love and grace to others." Take out a sheet of paper and write down who may be 'enemies' in your life. Write out why you think they are enemies. How can God help you demonstrate his love to this person?

THE WORD (NIV)

1 John 2:7-11

⁷ 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. ⁸ Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

⁹ Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister[a] is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves their brother and sister[b] lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

Matthew 22:36-40

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Luke 6:27-28

²⁷ "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

1 John 4:7-8, 16, 19

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us.

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The Book of 1 John is a letter written by the apostle John to address false teaching infiltrating the church about what it meant to be a Christian. Many believers were being confused about their faith, or even what it meant to be a Christian at all. In today's lesson from Scripture (1 John 2:7-11) we are given another evidence of a sincere follower of Christ.

Authentic Christians seek to live like Jesus lived and to love like Jesus loved. John did not say that you have to live this way to have eternal life. The evidence is that you will want to live this way. Not always perfectly; but that the direction of your life is to live and love like Jesus. Valentine's Day reminds us that there is no greater longing in the heart than to be accepted and loved. Unhappy and unfulfilled people with broken and strained relationships result when we do not feel loved and accepted. When we struggle loving others and feeling loved by others — it is because we do not understand God's love for us. We need to grow in our understanding of what real love is, how to give it and receive it. True love that lasts is found in God: We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Without God, we have no basis even to know what love is. The apostle John is very clear about this throughout his letter (1 John 2:9, see also 1 John 3:14, 4:7-12, 20). It is the willingness to extend love and grace to others that shows you have truly experienced the love and grace of God in your life.

John says in v.7 that he is not writing a new command (referring to what Jesus called . . . the first and greatest commandment. Matt 22:36-39). Then in v.8 John says, "Yet I am writing you a new command . . ." John is neither replacing the old commandment nor contradicting himself here. He gives us a new perspective or insight into love. Most people see sin as all about 'do's and don'ts'. But sin at its core is simply this: worshiping or loving someone or something more than God. God insists that He be the object of our highest affection. With Christ's coming to earth, we now have an example of someone who loves God and others perfectly. The command to "love one another" is not new. What is new is when Jesus says, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34)." Same command yet filled with new meaning because of the way Jesus loved us. He left heaven to come to earth, became a man, died for us to take the blame and punishment for our sins — no one has ever loved like that. Jesus said this in the Upper Room at the Last Supper to his disciples, knowing Judas would betray him to be arrested, mocked, beaten and nailed to a cross. But the disciples don't hear him. They are focused on themselves and debating who among them is the greatest; while in the absence of a servant Jesus washes their feet: a task fit only for the lowliest servant or slave. How was Jesus able to love them as He did? Roman 5:5 provides a hint. Jesus lived in humble dependence on His heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit filled His heart with God's unmeasured love. This love was given to him. The same is true for us. As we embrace Christ as Saviour & Lord, we become one with Christ — He in us and we in Him. The love of Christ is now in us. The darkness of who we were slowly passes away as the true light of who we are in Christ shines more brightly each day through the power of the Holy Spirit. We will not love perfectly, but love will be the direction of our life.

In v.9, John uses the word 'hate' to describe when we do not love. Most of us convince ourselves that we don't really 'hate' but John says to call it what it is: if you hate a brother or sister, you are in darkness. However, we don't stay there; we take steps toward the light to make things right. The Greek has 4 words for 'love': **Storge** — love for family; **Eros** — romantic sexual love; **Philea** — friendship love (all describing a person's feelings of love for another - which cannot be forced); and **Agape**. Agape is love that is a decision to love someone and choosing to extend grace, goodwill and blessing to them while treating them as if you did like them even if they don't love us back or even deserve to be loved. Luke 6:27-31 speaks to those who listen: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. There is no command to 'like' your enemies.

How do we do this? **First**, we need to name and know who our enemy is. We like to think we don't hate anyone, so we go into denial. Per Derryl Johnson, 'you don't come to love our enemies until you admit that they are actually your enemies'. Pastor Henry gives some examples to help us identify our enemies. Among others, your enemy may be: someone who simply doesn't like you and makes you quite aware of it, who mistreats or seeks to injure you, who abused you; people of a certain race or religion or who hold opposing views on politics or hyper-sensitive issues such as abortion, homosexuality, etc.; parents who indulged or spoiled you; a rebellious or ungrateful child, a spouse who withholds affection or love or a former spouse who cheated on you; a best friend who betrayed you, an obnoxious neighbour, or a colleague who constantly undermines you at work . . . Is there a person you avoid, don't like, don't respect, don't pray for, compliment or encourage? Chances are high this person is your enemy. A **second** way to love your enemy is to do good to them. Were it in your power to help them, would you do it? CS Lewis says the key to loving your enemy is to treat them as if you liked them and "we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you love someone, you will presently come to love them." **Third**, we exercise agape love when we bless our enemies with our words. If hurtful words are spoken to us, we do not escalate the war of words by retaliating. We resist spreading rumour, gossip or slander. We will respond with kind words and greet them graciously (Proverbs 15:1). **Fourth**, we show agape love when we pray for them. We may not actually curse our enemy, but how often do we pray for God's blessing on our enemy? Jesus calls us to do so. Our capacity to pray for God's blessing on our enemy depends on our own experience of God's grace. God loves us too much to leave us stubbornly refusing to extend grace. Like a loving Father, He will often discipline us or bring us to where we need His grace and mercy. By His grace He restores us, and we begin to freely extend grace. We may not think much of our enemy or that they deserve grace, but God does. Jesus did not die just for us; he died for our enemy, too. Jesus thought us so precious, not worthless, that he died for us. God calls us to value all people He created with the same love. When someone's attitude or behaviour repulses, we are to remember that He died for this person: who needs Jesus just as we do, and see the love of Jesus in us. We do not do this in our strength: we humbly ask God to change us as we lean into the Lord and ask for His grace in our lives. God reassures us that we walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16) even as He changes and transforms our hearts and attitudes to love the way Jesus loves.