

## Lovers...Gotta Love.

Last week we finished the book of Jonah. God left Jonah with a burning question. Essentially asking him, do you care about anything or anyone but yourself? Are you worshiping you or Me? It is a question for us as well. There is no place for hatred or racism in the heart of a follower of Jesus. God specifically chose Jonah to go to Nineveh because He wanted to clean out Jonah's heart and make him deal with what he had been ignoring. As we said in the first week....God had already decided that Jonah would learn this lesson. Jonah just chose to go to Desperation first. And we saw that Jonah did eventually learn his lesson but it was some time after the Revival of Nineveh. Jonah wrote this too us so that we would not have to learn this lesson the hard way. So we need to pause this week and make sure that the story of Jonah is hardwired into our Spirits. In fact, God spoke to us through the Apostle John.

Let's take a look at what John wrote in his later years....John was known as the Disciple of Love....He didn't start out that way...At first he was a son of thunder....but after Jesus got into him....John was all about love. 1 John 4:7–12 (ESV) 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:13–21 (ESV) 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ... 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. .... 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

What John is trying to help us understand is essentially this. God is Love. The Holy Spirit is Love. If you have the Holy Spirit you can't help but love others. You may be growing in that area, but deep inside you must be developing a love for others.

It is not that we choose to love others....loving others becomes a part of our new existence as a born again believer. In fact, you can't....not love others....if the Holy Spirit is in you. God is love and God cannot hate us. There is no place for hate in the essence of God. More simply, God's Spirit will not allow you to hate His creation. Remember God is Love and believers have been immersed in that Spirit.

John is telling us that hate cannot be in the heart of true believers. Hate for others and the presence of God do not coexist in the human Spirit. God makes it very clear here. If you love God...if the Spirit of God is in you....if you have been reborn in the Spirit....you can't truly hate other people...You simply can't. Why? God is love. The presence of God demands love. Not as an obedience issue....as an essence issue.

**21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.**

The word must in this verse is a qualifier not a determiner. In other words, there is no choice in this command. It is not a command searching for obedience. It is a command of recognition.

He is not saying....if you love God you must choose to love your brother.

What he is saying is this....the love of God coexists with the love of your brother. You can't have one without the other. It is not that you choose to do it....you must....as part of your new nature.

So God is Love and if His Spirit is in you....you are growing in His love...and thus there is never a place in you for true hate of others. You may embrace it for a short time, but it cannot coexist as a key part of who you are..if you are in Christ.

Now we know from the book of Jonah that Jonah eventually learned this lesson the hard way. It is important however to recognize that we are different than Jonah.

Jonah, as a prophet of God, was at times empowered with the Holy Spirit. In fact, it was probably most of the time. In the time prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus....The Spirit of God was placed on someone for specific purposes to empower them to do what God had called them to do.

We saw that at times King Saul was empowered with God's Spirit and then it was taken from him. It is thus easy for us to look at Jonah and wonder why he didn't love the Assyrians....at least as a people....or at least the children...or at least their kittens.

But in many ways, I think God was more patient with those in the Old Testament because He knew that they were operating without the Power of the Holy Spirit. The Assyrians...all the Pagans...all the Jews...almost everyone other than the select few who temporarily were empowered by the Spirit were always operating in the flesh. Nothing in them moved them to want to follow God.

They could never....on even their best day....share the love of God with others...because they didn't have it. Don't misunderstand....they loved God....as fallen humans know how to....but they did not possess the LOVE OF GOD.

Every one of them was a slave to sin. Born to worship Satan. Naturally inclined to resist God. Remember we did not become sinners...we did not become enemies of God...we were born that way.

Now also remember that those who lived in the Old Testament times....had never seen the love OF God in hardly anyone. If they were fortunate to see a prophet operating in the Spirit they may have, but no one was walking around the world born again in the Spirit of God. No one was manifesting the fruit of the Spirit of God.

The world had not seen God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, forbearance, goodness and self control in almost anyone. The whole idea of selfless unconditional love was foreign to them. It did not exist on this planet.

In fact, it could not exist on this planet because this planet like man was under the same curse of sin. If God's love was to ever be manifested in His creation again....like in the days before Adam and Eve's fall....then it would have to come from Heaven back to earth.

That is one of the reasons that Jesus was so radical. He showed us how to live in a way that the world had truly never seen before. He came to show us God....and God is Love. What did Jesus possess that was so unique, so inviting, and so transforming?

The unconditional love OF God poured out on to people who had never personally experienced it. Jesus showed the world what God's love is really like. His message was not that we should choose to love God in a human way...His message was that we should allow God's love to immerse us in a supernatural way.

Jesus didn't say that he came to earth to teach us how to love God and love others as humans love. Our love is conditional. Without God we truly could never actually unconditionally love other people. We don't and will never have unconditional love if we are born of the flesh.

John 13:34–35 (ESV) 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 15:16–17 (ESV) 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

John 15:19 (ESV) 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 17:13–18 (ESV) 13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

So Jesus teaches us....that those who truly follow Him...those who are truly born of His Spirit...cannot continually hate other people...because God is love and we have the LOVE OF GOD guiding us.

Jesus brought a new kind of love to the world that no one had seen before. It was radical, it was incredible, and it was transformational. We can't fully appreciate how unique this was because we have grown up in a world where a lot of people possess and manifest the love OF God because they are born again believers.

We have experienced the Love OF God poured out on us through others who believe. In fact, most of us are probably here because that love flowed from God's heart...through someone's heart and into yours. In the Old Testament...that had really never happened before....until...well until Jesus brought God's love and eventually God's Spirit of Love back to earth. That is why Jesus tells us in this passage...

John 13:35 (ESV) 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

And Jesus says...I bring you Shalom...the Peace of God and Peace with God.

John 14:27 (ESV) 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Jesus does not give as the world gives....There is nothing in this world that Jesus offers to us. In fact, Jesus warns us to seek from Him only that which comes from Heaven.

Let me repeat that....Jesus tells us to seek from Him only that which He brings to us from Heaven. We are not to seek God so that we can get earthly things. Please hear this....nothing in this world has any value compared to what Jesus brings to us from Heaven. Even your life....your temporary life on earth...has absolutely no value compared to the gift Jesus brings from the throne.

Matthew 16:25–26 (ESV) 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

If your life doesn't matter than anything you accumulate during your life doesn't matter either. The only thing of value that you take with you to Heaven is your love of God and the relationships that you have with those who are in Christ. So God continues....

1 John 2:15–17 (ESV) 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

So let's go back to our original passage today.....and read it again with fresh eyes.

1 John 4:7–12 (ESV) 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:13–16 (ESV) 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

1 John 4:17–21 (ESV) 17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

1 John 5:1–5 (ESV) 1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Notice in particular verse 3 here. "3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."

Why are His commandments not burdensome? Because when we are empowered with the Holy Spirit...obeying God....comes naturally to us. His commandments are only burdensome when we try to obey them in our power without the Helper Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:5–8 (ESV) 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:9–10 (ESV) 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Romans 8:13 (ESV) 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 8:35–39 (ESV) 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? .....37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Note...the LOVE OF GOD in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 22:36–40 (ESV) 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Born in the flesh the one thing we know how to do naturally is to love ourselves. We may not always like ourselves but we always love ourselves. We take care of our needs first, we look at the world based on what is happening to us, we care first and foremost about ourselves. Our love...even for ourselves...is conditional....there are times when we hate who we are....but we never stop doing what we think is best for us. Deep down, at our core, what we do in the flesh is always what we truly think is best for us...first. Even something like suicide...is a selfish decision...desiring to go to a place....that is better than the one we are in. Doing what we think is truly best for us in that moment.

But Jesus says....there are two commandments....the greatest commandments. And by the way, I never gave you these commandments in the Old Testament because you never had the power to fulfill them.

John 13:34–35 (ESV) 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

This new commandment to love others with the love that comes from the throne of God....a love that Jesus brought back to earth from heaven...I give to you now..because I am leaving in you MY love....and when you are full of my love...you can't hate the people that I love.

When people see God's supernatural love....poured out on them...through you....they will know that you are my disciples. You can't be my disciple and not love other people.

What does that love look like? The love that only comes from Heaven?

1 Corinthians 13:4–13 (ESV) 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends. ....13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

When I was a child we used to sing an old campfire song called "And they will know that we are Christians by our love" Do they? When people come into Remnant is it love that overwhelms them or judgment? Are we sitting up on the hill full of hate or are we down with the masses celebrating their revival in love? Jonah had to go through a lot to learn the lesson that God had for him. Remember God chose him to go to Nineveh because of his lack of love for others. I believe that God brings us here for the same reason. Churches that truly love others are messy places.

Are we the church...the people of Jesus...who bear all things, hopes all things, and endures all things? Are we the people of Jesus who are patient....kind...without envy boasting or arrogance? Are we the Christians that they will know by our love?

There is no place for hate or racism in God's Family. That is why I said last week that we will not allow it at Remnant. We are going to love everyone because we simply can't help it. In fact, we can't stop doing it. We are born again in the Spirit of God. Hate of others we left at the cross and in the tomb when we walked out with Jesus.

We are now Spiritual beings....full of God's love...showering those who are desperate for something real. May we never forget Whose we are. Haters are going to hate....True lovers of Jesus....gotta love. We need to know for sure...which group we are in....Let's pray.