

Children's Moment

January 24, 2015

Title: Put on a godly way of life - take off the bad way of life

Theme: Pictures of new clothes

Scripture: “Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Do you like to wear new clothes? When do you usually get new clothes?
(Birthdays, Christmas, Easter, Back to School) I like to wear new clothes.

Did you know that Christians are like people who put on new clothes? When we become Christians, God makes us into new people. Before we can put on God’s new clean clothes we have to take off our old and dirty clothes, right?

To become new people in Christ, we must take off our old bad ways and put on God’s ways. Let me give you an example: God tells us to control our anger and don’t desire bad things. God also commands us not to say bad things about people, we should not say bad words, and we should not tell lies. Those are some of the old ways that we must get rid of.

After we have taken off our old ways, God can clothe us with His ways. We can love one another and be kind, polite, obedient, and helpful. We can become more like Jesus every day.

Pray - Lord Jesus, help me to change and become more like you every day. Amen

Love One Another

I do not share with you often enough how grateful I am that you allow me to preach the Word of God to you. That you faithfully come to hear the Word of God and this is a sign of your obedience to God. By your obedience you receive blessings and you are able to share these blessings of God's Word with others. Living out the Word of God brings us peace and joy in a tumultuous world.

As we continue our time in John's first letter it becomes obvious that the main theme is identifying the marks of true Christians. The whole letter is geared towards helping us discern who are real Christians and who truly belongs in the family of God. John's focus in verses 11 to 18 is love and what is the mark of love. If a person claims to be Christian they are claiming to be in union with God and living out the scriptures of God. John tells us to examine the way a person expresses love, which reveals their character and their character reveals their heart. A true Christian, one who has been born anew by God and indwelt with His Holy Spirit manifests a transformation in their lives. They love the Word of God and His righteousness and they love others.

Righteousness and Love

Righteousness and love are two key marks of a Christian. We looked at righteousness last week in verses 4 to 10. Verse 7 is clear, [“He who does what is right is righteous, just as he \(Jesus\) is righteous.”](#) John explains the opposite of righteousness in verse 8, [“He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the](#)

devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." A person reborn and indwelt lives differently as John wrote in verse 9, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God." John is not saying a true Christian is sinless, but is mortified by their sin. They have turned their life over Christ and by His power one sins less. This is the process of Sanctification. The first test we can apply to validate a person's claim that they are a Christian is the evidence of righteous behavior in all aspects of the life - church, family and job.

The second test is that of love, what a person loves and how a person loves. We have talked about the fact that technology has changed since the creation of mankind, but mankind has not. Today we have false Christians and false teachers within the greater church that calls itself Christian and so it was at the time of John writing this letter. These false teachers had come into the church planted by John and were claiming to have a special relationship with God. First they claim to have a special relationship beyond what other Christians have, which the Scriptures teaches is false. Secondly, they refused to acknowledge their sin and according to chapter one they denied they had any sins. These "superior Christians" behavior was not characterized by love for the brethren of Christ. John is making it clear in his letter that if someone claims to be Christian the truth can be determined in observing two things; first, they are living in obedience to the Word of God, living a righteous life and the second, thing that can be observed in a person claiming to be a Christian is that they exhibit love towards others as Christ did. My beloved, how am I measuring up to these standards? How are you measuring up?

True and False

False Christians and false teachers were a serious problem in John's time and they are a serious problem today. Praise God this problem existed in the early church! The gospel accounts tell us of the life and ministry of Jesus. The Book of Acts is historical and Revelation is prophetic. However, the letters of Paul, John, James and Peter mainly concern themselves with problems of doctrine and behavior. If these great apostles did not write concerning these problems we would not have the explanations and standards to live by today.

John corrected attitude and behavior in chapters 1 and 2. In chapter 2 he wrote, "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." (1 John 2:7) Living righteously and with love for others is not a new commandment but it is written of throughout the Old Testament. The problem was the Law convicted people of their sin, but offered no long-term solution. If you have been a Christian for any period of time, then you have been wounded by those who call themselves Christian or by the church. Bullies are in every area of life unfortunately the church is not exempt. This is the problem John is addressing.

This then should remind us that anytime we feel we need to address sin in a person's life we need to remember it is to be for correction and restoration. Jesus warned about judgment of others, "Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be **measured** to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?"

⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5) Isn't this what John was saying, “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” (1 John 2:9-11) John is reminding us that the people of God have always been marked by their righteousness and love. In chapter 19 of Leviticus from verse 9 to 18 the behavior of the people of God towards others is defined. Over and over all throughout the Bible the people of God are commanded to live righteous and to first love God and then others. John deals with these same two principles over and over. Each time he writes of these two fundamental behaviors of true Christians he goes deeper. It is like when you screw two boards together – there is an immediate bound, but the bound grows stronger the deeper the screw goes and the tighter it draws the boards together.

Paul wrote of the life we live as Christians, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, (why and how is this all possible), **because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**” (Romans 5:1-5) Everything God does for us is based in His love for us; all that we do should be based in our love for Him.

Beginning and Present

Look with me at how John begins this section of scripture in 1 John 3:11, “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” Why does John say, “that you have heard from the beginning?” This is not the first time in his letter he has used this phrase, “Let what you **heard from the beginning** abide in you. If what you **heard from the beginning** abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.” (1 John 2:24-25) John is making clear that the problem has existed from the beginning. What problem is he referring to? They knew the truth of the gospel from the beginning, because the apostles had consistently taught it. They had been taught the truth about Christ. From the beginning they had been taught about their sinful state and desperate need for Christ. They had been taught about righteousness and obedience. From the beginning they had been taught about God’s love for them and how they should love others as found throughout the letters of the apostles. However, at some point in time false teachers had come into the church and they were teaching another gospel, a false gospel. John is saying, stop, go back to the beginning, is what you are now hearing consistent with what you were taught in the beginning? Both then and now we must evaluate everything by the beginning. The New Testament must stand on the Old and it does. Churches and doctrine must stand upon the beginning, which is, the Word of God. Look around us how did there end up being so many false religions? How did there end up being so many false churches that label themselves Christian? How? It has happened because they do not hold up everything to the light of the Word of God. This was such a serious problem for the early church Paul wrote, “*Why are you turning to a different gospel—* ⁷ *not that there*

is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.” (Galatians 1:6b-9) Paul uses the word “accursed” twice. False teachers are condemned to hell. This is serious. The world or their followers may consider them great, but God says they will be in hell. False teachers may end up with hundreds of followers, as we have seen here in New Mexico and other states. They may have millions following them instead of the biblical Christ as we see with Mormons, Jehovah’s Witness and others. Over a billion people, so far, believe the greatest lie of Satan, and that is Islam. Every false teacher or religion can be shown to be false by history and by the Bible that has proven itself true throughout history and in the lives of those who have been changed by God to live righteous and with love for others. One cannot have a relationship with the One true God without believing in the biblical Christ. Jesus is more than a man or a prophet; He is God incarnate, the Messiah, and the Savior of those called by God. Our world is full of hate, but hate never comes from true Christians. I forgot there is one exception - Christians hate sin, especially their own. False teachers are always saying they are bringing something new. Is the Word of God true as He gave it or not? The Word of God stands true by the test of time and therefore, anything new is not true. Over time our understanding has increased as the language of the Bible, history and archeology are studied and have shown more clearly the truth of the Word of God. Anyone who adds to or takes away from the Word of God is under the judgment of God and that is not where I want to be. At the end of the Bible John is clear, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the

prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” (Revelation 22:18-19) One may argue John is saying this about the Book of Revelation only. However, I believe it applies to the entire Bible.

Look back at verse 5 of chapter 1, John writes, “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” John is saying, I lived with Christ and I am writing and teaching what Christ taught me. I am not adding to or taking away from what Jesus taught. You false teachers cannot change who Christ is. Anything that is not true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not true. One common sign of a cult is that you are not to question it or it’s leader. As Christians we encourage people to question and challenge the scriptures for we know truth will stand up to scrutiny.

Old and New

Back to what John wrote in verse 11, “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” This means to love one another at a higher level, a love that is self-sacrificing, to love the way Jesus loved. This is why Jesus’ command to love is old and yet new, because there had never been anyone like Jesus and He gave an example for believers to follow until He returns. This is what Jesus mean when He said, “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 13:34-35) We show the world who Jesus is by our

obedience to the scriptures and our love. Not by isolated compounds shut off from the world or by money amassed or by forcing people into submission. These behaviors show the falseness of what is being done.

Jesus commanded His disciples in the upper room, saying, **“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you.”** (John 15:12-14) This is a self-sacrificing love. This is why Christians take the gospel to the world while they feed the poor, teach children, build hospitals, etc. Helping people with the love Christ has demonstrated for us in the scriptures. God works in the hearts of His children so they have a love that overflows and makes the world better. Without Christians boldly living righteously with the love of Christ how much darker and how much more evil would there be in this world?

To help us understand this great love John introduces an Old Testament theme to show contrast to Christian love. John often uses contrasts and here he contrasts the children of the devil with the children of God. It is a simple and straightforward contrast, the children of the devil hate and the children of God love. The children of the devil resent the true God and the children of God respect Him. The children of the devil are selfish and the children of God are sacrificial towards one another. The children of the devil work hard at disavowing or changing the Word of God; the children of God live and love the Scriptures.

True and False

Most of the rest of this passage in 1 John 3 is about the characteristics of the

children of the devil. All of these characteristics show the absence of love. Reading verse 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.” The first non-Christian characteristic is murder and I would say that murder is absent of love. Murder is an act of hate. If a teacher or religion promotes murder of those who are different or who refuse to believe as they do, then it is based on the lack of love and is built upon hate and hate comes from the devil. Only if one does not know the true God are they able to murder and take the life of another person who was created by God.

John uses the Old Testament reference of Cain. Cain is the classic example of a murderer. What happened? Cain and Abel had the same parents. They were raised in the same home and had the same influences. Their parents worshipped the One God Creator. They came to sacrifice to that same God. Both Cain and Abel were worshippers of the One God. They both were only one generation removed from the parents who had walked with God in the garden. Surely, Adam and Eve had told them of God and their experiences with God. They would have told their children of God’s judgment for their sin. God had cursed the earth and the serpent. Cain and Abel would have known of these curses but also the blessing God pronounced on Adam and Eve. They would have been aware that from the seed of the woman would come One who would bruise the head of the serpent. So did they not both know the One true God? They did indeed.

The scriptures teach us then that Cain was not an atheist, but a religious person and worshipper of God. From the time of Cain until this very day, some of the most murderous people to exist throughout history, some of the greatest haters were

religious people. Think of all the religious wars that have been fought throughout history. It was not atheists who murdered Jesus. It was not atheists who shouted for His blood and demanded the Romans crucify Him. It was people who were religious and had moved away from the Word of God and had distorted the Word of God into something for their benefit. These were the people warned about in Galatians chapter 1. The God these people said they worshipped is the same God that they murdered. Outward ritual, outward works, outward religiosity is not proof of being born again and living in love of the true God. Cain was a religious man, but he brought the wrong sacrifice because he had changed what God required to his own liking. If his sacrifice was wrong, then he had to know that God wanted an animal sacrifice. Abel was obedient to God and Cain was not. Cain did not bring an animal that God provided, but he brought a sacrifice of the fruit of the land in which he had toiled and produced. Cain wanted to base his relationship with God on what he accomplished. That simply is not how it works. We have a relationship with God based on what He accomplishes. Cain was a religious man, but a disobedient one.

Cain failed the tests of obedience and love. It is clear he was not an atheist and that he worshipped the true God, but he worshipped in the wrong way and from a self-centered heart. Cain's sacrifice was part of the test, but not the whole test. For we quickly see Cain despised Abel for being obedient to God. Cain despised his brother for his obedience and love of God. Today it is the same. True believers, true Christians are despised by the world because the world hates those who are obedient to God and love God and understand that the truly religious base their relationship with God on what He has done. False prophets, false teachers and false Christians desire is to corrupt the true gospel because they hate and they hate

because they are the children of the devil. It is the ungodly that hate the godly because they expose their sin and because they hate the light of the gospel.

Cain is the example of the religious person who is lost. Genesis chapter 4 begins, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.’ ” (Genesis 4:1) Just because Cain was born into a religious household was no guarantee he would believe. Look at the condition of Cain’s heart. God had revealed earlier in Genesis that he wanted animal sacrifices because this foreshadowed the coming Messiah. The cleansing of sin requires death. Cain was disobedient and we read “for Cain and his offering he (God) had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.” (Genesis 4:5) God responds to Cain saying, “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.” God is telling Cain you need to get a hold of yourself, you need to deal with your sin and the heart condition that lead you to sin. This was the same concern of Peter, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” (1 Peter 5:8-10) The devil prowls and we must hold fast and be ready for battle. Our greatest weapons are the Word of God, prayer and the love of Christ.

Cain had rejected a relationship with God on God’s terms because verse 12 says, “Cain was of the evil one” Here the word “evil” means to be in active opposition of good, it means one has determined to be evil and works at being evil. This is the

same word the scriptures use to describe Satan. Satan is evil and bent on going down and perishing because he hates God. Satan wants to take the world to hell with him. Corrupting the Word of God is his main way of accomplishing this.

Humans learned to murder even when they were taught to worship. People can be taught to worship, but if they belong to the devil they will use what they are taught to murder. So, we come to understand Cain murdered Abel because his brother was righteous and evil people hate those who are righteous. Several places in the New Testament Abel is described as righteous. God through His Word, both old and new, has given clear instructions on how we are to worship Him. Cain rejected the instruction of God and when he saw God was displeased. Cain decided if God wanted a blood sacrifice he would show God his disdain and murdered his brother whose blood soaked into the ground. Cain refused to repent because his father was the devil.

The Bible does not say after Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God and Cain's sacrifice was rejected that Abel chided Cain. Abel did not lord it over Cain. Cain murdered Abel because his deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous. Nothing will change until the return of Christ. The world will remain evil, under the power of the prince of the air and most of the world's people are the children of the devil. It isn't a wonder by God does not save everyone, but that God does save some.

People have murderous hearts and only by the regeneration of God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can we overcome our desire to be children of the devil and live righteous and with true love. The world's love is damaging as all things that belong to Satan. John writes, [“Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates](#)

you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.” (1 John 3:13-14) The prince of the air, the evil one, rules the world and evil loves murder. John continues, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” Most people have never murdered anyone, but the truth is most would have liked to at some point. The only difference between murdering and hate is the action, but both are the same attitude. Hatred is the same as murder, but not acted upon. You and I have had this desire until God made us new creations. Because of Christ we are able to love those who hate us. Verse 16 says, “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” It is because of God we have sacrificial love. Jesus goes a step further than John, saying, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” (Matthew 5:21-22) Our responsibility goes beyond not hating and murdering, but dealing with anger and forgiveness and loving those who hate us.

Sacrifice and Love

Sacrificial love keeps us from hating and murdering, but does it spur us to also care for others? John says righteous living and loving goes beyond this. He writes in verses 17 and 18, “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.” True religion and

sacrificial love means that we serve others through the love of Christ. Look at the many good works that are being done around the world. Most do not last because they are good deeds without the love of Christ. Without Christ the world changes very little. With Christ change is dramatic and lasts for eternity. This is one reason why we are to be God's agents of change.

John is concerned about the marks of a true Christian and how true Christians can evaluate others who claim to be Christian. This morning we have observed that two primary outward signs that someone is a true believer is they desire and work at living righteous lives that are obedient to the Bible. Secondly they love Christ above all else in their life and this enables them to love others more than themselves.

John wants us to understand there is no middle ground; a person either belongs to God or Satan. Satan wants people to live their lives with hate, anger and destruction. Satan is the opposite of all that Christ is – light, truth, love, grace, mercy and wanting the best for each person. Living in the world without Christ is a struggle with no hope and false promises that bring disappointment and pain.

Living for Christ means to live with hope in Him, love from Him and love for others. Oh, what a rich life we live in Christ. A life lived by true love in Christ the righteous. Amen!

