

Sept 1/24 – Leader’s Guide 1 John 4: 7-19; John 21:15-17 “Love God”

Read 1 John 4: 7-16

John is writing to a church that is struggling with theological confusion. The apostles have left and new teachers have come in preaching a different gospel. John writes to reorient this church to the heart of the gospel. This section is bracketed by one of his main points – true gospel conviction bears love as its primary fruit.

1. (vs. 9-10) What are the two expressions of God’s love for us in Jesus? What does each look like and how are they related?

Vs. 9 - God’s love was made manifest in this, that God sent his son, sent Jesus that we might live through him. In Greek there are two words for life. Bios and Zoe. Bios is where we get our word biology. All of us have bios, all of us have biological life but not all of us have zoe. Zoe is the life of God. The life of his spirit, animating us, leading us to live fully human lives, pulsating with his joy his goodness his love his justice.

Vs. 10 – In this is love that God sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. By that word propitiation John takes us to the cross and links the cross to the old testament sacrificial system where this word is primarily used to speak of our sin being carried away and the removal of guilt.

How are they related? On the day of atonement animals were sacrificed but those animals were not to deal with the sins of the people. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled over the temple to cleanse it. Why? So that the shekinah glory, the very presence of the living God might dwell in their midst that they would reflect his goodness, his character, his glory out into the world.

Also on the day of atonement the high priest would confess the sins of the people. Symbolically transferring that sin onto the head of the goat. That goat however was not killed as a substitute. It was sent out into the wilderness symbolically carrying the sins of the people away.

The link then is that the work of the cross carries our sin away and cleanses our lives so that we as individual followers of Jesus (and this is a major theme of the new testament) might be temple. That we would be the place where the presence of God dwells, that his life, his zoe might take up residence in us.

Read Mark 14: 26-29; 43-50; 53-54; 66-72 & John 21:15-17

Jesus work on the cross is about carrying away sin that his life, his zoe, his very presence may take up residence within us. In Peter’s story we have a glorious picture of this work of Jesus.

2. What do you notice about Jesus' work in Peter's life?

Notice that Jesus doesn't address in Peter his lying, his lack of courage, his curse, his selfishness. Jesus goes right to the heart of Peter's sin – his pride. "Do you love me more than these"

It is a lovingly surgical removal as it in the same setting – around a fire – the same number of times – three – and as his profession of pride had been public so is his restoration.

The following is an unedited portion of this part of the sermon to help you reflect on how this incident may have touched Peter's heart and how it relates to us:

Hear Jesus saying: Peter peter – do you see your pride – yes I see it – Peter Peter – I want to you to see that I see it to – I see you right the way to the bottom – and I love you – and I love you enough to take it from you – cleanse you - that my zoe – my life might be made more manifest in you.

That is the direction of his love in all our lives – for Jesus comes to each and every one of us and says - I want you to see – to see the sin – the brokenness – the thing that is causing you – causing others the most harm – do you see it – I see it – I want you to know that I see it – I know the thing you want no one else to know – I see the thing you want no one else to see – the thing you even try and hide from yourself - I know you right the way to the bottom – and I love you – and in love I want to cut that thing out of you – that my presence – my zoe – my life might be made more manifest in you – that you would pulsate with my joy – my goodness – my love – my justice...

3. Have you had an experience of this work of Jesus in your own life that would be of mutual encouragement to your group? Were some of the elements that were present in Peter's story present in your own? What impact has that had on your life?

As always these questions that are designed to help your group reflect on the present work of Jesus in their life is helped along by you as facilitator. If you have a story ready to go, one that is open and vulnerable, it will encourage others to follow suit...

These type of questions build trust within your group deepening the intimacy of Christian community so that you can better support one another in the life of faith. Take a risk, build trust, invite confidentiality within the group...

Jesus perfecting love in Peter's life is shaping him for the task of leading the church out of his encounter with grace. John goes on in his letter to reveal the ultimate goal of Jesus' perfecting love in our lives.

Read 1 John 4: 17-19

4. What is the day of judgement? What does it look like to have confidence "for" it?

The day of judgement is the day when Jesus will come again to judge sin.

It is a day we can meet without any fear for in Jesus our sin has been carried away.

This is a day that we can look forward to with every fibre of our being. For on that day Jesus will come again to make everything new. He will come to right all wrongs, to restore what has been lost, to heal what has been broken, to wipe away evil and flood the earth with his love, his peace, his justice, his goodness.

Our confidence in it is rooted in the faithfulness of Jesus.

5. How does this confidence "for" the day of judgement shape us to be as Jesus is in the world?

Jesus pointed to the fullness of his kingdom come in everything that he did and said.

His spirit coming to dwell within us is so that we might live through him. His life (zoe) within us is meant to shape us to anticipate that future in all we do and say and pray. Forming us as ambassadors of that coming kingdom, ambassadors who love as we have been loved.

6. In the sermon Tim gave the illustration that for an electrical circuit to work as intended it must be properly connected to the power. Similarly, we must be rightly connected to God's love for us in Jesus so that everything else in the Christian life works as intended. How do our regular patterns of worship rightly connect us to the love of God in Jesus so that everything else in the Christian life works as intended?

The following is an unedited portion of the sermon where this question is reflected upon which may help guide your discussion:

Love God – our desire here is to properly connect all of us to the love of God in Jesus – so that every other aspect of the Christian life works as intended

That connection is brought about in our regular patterns of worship - of worthship – where we see together what Jesus is worth and give him what he's worth – a worship that involves the entirety of our being – guides our thinking – directs our wills – stirs up our affections

A pattern of worship that allows us to intellectually chew on the truth of God's word where we discover together his love – his goodness – his grace – where we in light

of his holiness see our sin and brokenness – and are brought to plunge them into his love – a love that sees us all the way to the bottom and loves us none the less

A pattern of liturgical worship that forms practices – practices of repentance and faith – practices of reconciliation – practices of turning outward for the sake of others – practices of the kingdom.

A pattern of worship that directs our affections – in song revelling in his glorious love

Love God – is an invitation to press into regular patterns of worship – that we might be rightly connected to the love of God – so that every other aspect of the Christian life works as it was intended.

In his incredible book – the dynamics of spiritual life – Richard Lovelace articulates it this way - if we start each day with our personal security not resting on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ – we are inevitably moved to discouragement and apathy (we won't love) – but the faith – the gospel faith that is able to warm itself at the fire of God's love and what Jesus has done for us – instead of having to steal love and self acceptance from other sources – is the very root of peace – go to this fire – it is merry – it is bright –

So come little t – let us love God – in worship – in worthship - let us warm ourselves at the fire of his love – that his life his zoe may dwell within us – forming us to bear witness to the day he will come again to make everything new.

Little t - let us together be a people who love God