

GOD IS LOVE...LET ME BE LOVE!

INTRODUCTION

Last Sunday night Conrad preached on eschatology. As part of his message, he made a very sobering statement...

Some people who have worked for God and done all kind of good works would one day stand in front of God and hear that they are going to hell and not heaven. This statement comes from Jesus words in **Matthew 7:21-23**: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

These are not the words any person would ever want to hear, and yet sadly, many people who say they are Christians will hear these words, Why? Jesus said, ""Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." To do anything else is to practice lawlessness! Wow...

This is a real challenge; how do we know we are doing the Father's will? I found the answer in 1 John chapters 2-4. These chapters speak of walking in righteousness, abiding in God and walking in love.

It actually boils down to one thing – **walk in love!** If we can grasp this one thing, not only will we be doing our Father's will, **but it will also provide the blessed assurance that will remove all fear of not making the grade.**

MESSAGE

I AM LIKE MY FATHER

The world we live in sadly lacking when it comes to love. An "everyone for themselves" attitude exists. It is well described in Paul's letter to Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (NKJV) But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

But God is not like that! God is love and when we learn to love we learn to reflect His character.

Paul wrote, "imitate me as I imitate Christ." Christ said, "if you have you seen Me, you see my Father". He said, and did everything Father God told Him, and He reflected Father God's nature as He walked on the earth.

Therefore, we know, **as we imitate Christ**, we imitate our heavenly Father too. **We are like Him!**

1 John 3:2 (NKJV) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

- We shall be like Him!
- What is God like? One of the simplest and yet the most all-encompassing descriptions of God is that He is love!

1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.**

This is why the greatest commandment we have is to love: **1 John 4:21** confirms this - "And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

- What this commandment is really saying is that if we want to imitate the character of our heavenly Father, we must walk in love.

My first challenge today is to ask each of us to evaluate our hearts and see if we are truly walking in love.

THROUGH LOVE, WE CREATE CONFIDENCE FOR THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

I began this message by saying there will be many who get turned away on the day of judgement. Jesus will say to them, "I never knew you".

What a source of anxiety and fear! But if we learn to walk in love, the Bible teaches that we build confidence for the day of judgement:

1 John 4:16b-18 (NKJV) and **he who abides in love abides in God**, and God in him. 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; **because as He is, so are we in this world.** 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

- When we walk in love we become "as He is in this world" we become like God in character! If we have His character we need not fear judgement!

- Love has been perfected among us – not one of us is perfect, but God is, this tells us that He must be involved in perfecting that love among us. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:2 that “we are being saved”. It speaks of a process!
- As we abide in Him, His Holy Spirit works in us through grace and brings about the change that results in perfect love.
- When we walk in the love of Christ and the Holy Spirit perfects it in us, in the place of fear of judgement comes peace and rejoicing and a hope of a future with the Lord.

LOVE IS THE GREATEST “GIFT”

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (NKJV) Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. **And yet I show you a more excellent way.**

Paul then goes on to pen the great “love” chapter. In my ESV Bible, that chapter has the heading, **The Greatest Gift.**

- **The more excellent way that Paul is referring to here is the way of love!**

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV) And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but **the greatest of these is love.**

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NKJV) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

- Tongues are great, but without love, they are nothing!
- Prophecy, Biblical wisdom, understanding and knowledge are great, but without love, they are worthless.
- Having mountain moving faith is fantastic, but without love, we can have all the faith in the world, it won't help us.
- Being a generous person is necessary and a great blessing, but unless our motive is love, they count for nothing.
- Martyrdom, sacrifice, serving in the church, good deeds and so on are great, but unless the motive is love, we waste our lives!

In reality, if we want to achieve or do anything meaningful in God's kingdom, it has to be motivated through that character of our Father which we are imitating – It has to be motivated through love.

What is love like?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (NKJV) Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails...

This is basically the opposite of **2 Timothy 3:1-5** which I read earlier!

This is a description of our Father's character and we need to ask Him to help us do the same!

The focus on love rolls over into chapter 14 where the first two words are: **pursue love!**

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NKJV) Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

My next challenge is this: Have we made it our goal to pursue love? How important is it to us. How often do we revisit the love chapter and evaluate whether our love measures up?

THE VISION AND MISSION OF CHRISTIAN HERITAGE CHURCH

The story is told (by Ernest Hemingway) of a father and his teenage son who had a relationship that had become strained to the point of breaking. Finally the son ran away from home. His father, however, began a journey in search of his rebellious son. Finally, in Madrid, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in the newspaper. The ad read: "DEAR PACO, MEET ME IN FRONT OF THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE AT NOON. ALL IS FORGIVEN. I LOVE YOU. YOUR FATHER."

The next day at noon in front of the newspaper office, 800 "Paco's" showed up.

This week during the Holiday Bible Club, we had the privilege of ministering to many young Paco's. I believe the Lord showed me that through our VBS, many young lives experienced unconditional love that they hadn't experienced for a long time, or ever.

Church, God has placed us here for a reason! We have a role to play in our community.

Our Vision Statement is:

- To love God.
- To love people.
- To make disciples.
- To be a church of irresistible influence.
- To grow and thrive.

Our Mission Statement is:

- Flourishing in faith and growing in love.

God has allowed us to build love into our vision and mission statements.

My final challenge is this: How important are the words in our Vision and Mission statements to us? Are we living them out? Do our lives truly reflect love or will we be like those who Jesus rejects, saying "Get away from Me, I never knew you".

CONCLUSION

There is a movie in which there are two sisters who have been estranged for many years. When one of them is diagnosed with cancer, the other sister arrives to help take care of her. In one of the final scenes of the movie, the two sisters are talking about their lives, and the one with cancer says, "I'm so blessed. I've had so much love in my life."

"Yes, yes," the other sister agrees, barely looking at her sister while she cleans the kitchen. "You've always had people around you who loved you."

"Oh no," the other sister says with a look of surprise. "I'm blessed because I've been able to love so many people."

Let us walk in love, pursue love and treasure love. **As God is love, let us be love**, let us be like the woman I just spoke about and let our lives be a blessing because we are able to love so many people.