

Walk The Resurrection Road

1 John 3:11-24

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This weekend the Liberal party is meeting in Vancouver for their policy convention. It's their chance to figure out what the message is going to be that they'll want to send to the Canadian public. At least, that's what a policy convention is supposedly about. And then, apparently, delegates and MP's could head home and give us the message from the Liberals as to their vision of Canada.....

....at least the vision for now.

Political vision tends to shift. Green, sometimes. Not at others.

I mean - who would ever have believed that a Conservative government would push for part ownership of an automotive company?

Things change.

Sometimes because it is good and has to happen.

Sometimes for other reasons.

One thing that doesn't change is God, and His message to us.

Right from the very beginning it has stayed the same.

And it will continue to stay the same to the end of time.

Let's read that message –

1 John 3:11-24, p.240 (New Testament)

This is the message you have heard from the beginning:

We should love one another.

It's simple.

It's never changed.

And yet it is one of the most difficult messages ever.

Not difficult to understand.

But difficult in **DOING IT**.

I met someone a few years ago who used to be a part of Calvin Church.

We got to talking about why they left. And she said to me,

"You know - I couldn't handle hearing any longer how I had to love people there. There's a few people there that I don't get along with. And to keep hearing that I had to love them? No."

Unfortunately, that message will continue.

"Love one another."

The other option, says John, is a life of self-interest.

Looking after the big number one.

Which is what Cain did - couldn't handle his brother coming out ahead of him, and it resulted in the first murder.

Cain made some decisions in life that displeased God. When he made his offering, God wasn't amused.

His brother, meanwhile, stayed connected to God. His offering was received. And Cain wasn't amused.

He wanted the same or better for himself.

He felt ripped off, left behind.

He became jealous.

He got angry.

He killed.

That's Cain.

Could it be you?

You've got a choice -

Build up the life of another.

Or head down the road which could potentially lead to you being a part of the destruction of their life.

You choose, says John.

But be aware of this - if you choose not to love your brother or sister, you'll be stuck in death. You're running a big risk of getting caught up in hatred. And hatred is as good as murder in God's eyes. 'Cause already in your mind you're harbouring imaginations of them being taken down. You'd be secretly delighted to get news of their pet project falling to pieces.

Enough!

Back to the message that is there from the beginning.

The message of life.

The message of love.

Did you notice verse 14?

Did it jump out at you in this Easter season?

Yes, you caught it, didn't you!

V.14 -

You know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death.

Friends, we're here this morning, still caught up in the message of Easter.

It is the message of Jesus laying down his life for us.

Going all the way to death for us.

And then, with heavenly power, triumphing **over** death.

Passing right through the back door of death to eternal life.

And we, we who believe in him,

we who belong to him,

we have passed from death to life right along with him.

Death has no more control over us, no more grip on us, than it has on Jesus.

The one with the grip on us, the control over us, is Jesus.

His message becomes our message.

Our talking points.

Our action plan.

We speak his message.

We live his message.

We **become** his message.

Love one another.

From the beginning of John's letter to the end, that's the statement.

Love one another.

Go live Easter – *Love one another.*

Live the life that passes from death to life - *Love one another.*

Very concrete.

Very specific.

Very real.

Very connected to your daily life.

Which is very different than what some of the people thought in the church to whom John wrote this letter. For them Christ was a high and holy being. He was divine, alright. But human? Not so much. It was the heresy of *docetism*.

And believing in a Jesus who wasn't really human, but just **appeared** to be human, meant that your Christian faith could easily be disconnected from human life..... it only would have to **appear** to link Sunday to the rest of the week.

It meant that you could do a great worship service on Sunday, feel great and get all caught up with the

energy and great feelings - and then go out to cheat on your taxes on Tuesday. It meant you could smile at others at church on Sunday, but not care at all that they're struggling to provide care to an ailing family member on Wednesday.

John smashes that kind of belief to bits.

Forget you ever heard about it.

Get out there and

Love one another!

Love -

You may well encounter the myth that love is something which bubbles up from inside; that it is spontaneous - it just happens and, when it does, gives you great feelings, beyond that which drab, everyday life can give you.

You may hear that.

But tell me - does that sound **at all** like the Easter story?

Like the path Jesus followed out of love for us?

Friends, the love-life of Jesus is anything **but** spontaneous. It doesn't **just** happen. And while feelings **do** come, they are **not** at the front of the train, so to speak.

The love-life of Jesus is deliberate.

The love-life of Jesus puts others before self.

The love-life of Jesus costs.

The engine of love is found at the cross and in the grave, where Christ laid down his life for us. And where God stands, looking at us, commanding that we now lay down our lives for each other.

And in that place and attitude of care, and service, and sacrifice, and sharing and surrender

Evil is combatted.

Pain is countered.

Despair is replaced by hope.

Death is overcome by life.

And, like we saw last week, glimmers of the New Creation are seen.

Doesn't that sound better than any fleeting feelings?

Our love, then:

- begins with Jesus. Doesn't matter what other great ideas or feelings or hunches we come up. We put them in a pile at the side and go to Jesus. His person. His life. His death. His resurrection.

- is a lifetime of disciplined practice. Unlike feelings of falling in love, that come and go. Unlike some higher spiritual state that some claim you can reach. It is a way of life that God defines, and directs, and calls us to practice.

- is motivated by communion with God and with the community of God's people. We spend personal time with God. And we share time with others who share personal time with God. Then, as brothers and sisters joined in a family of faith we practice a way of life that embodies Christ's self-giving love.

We watch out for each other.

We care for each other.

We bail each other out in times of need.

We stand up for each other.

We protect each other.

We encourage each other.

And we consciously, carefully, make room for others to join this family. Because this love-life in Christ is not for us to keep in a cozy little circle.

When someone says, "I like this church the way it is" they are really speaking heresy. Because it is not just to keep for ourselves - as we've got it.

It is for the world.

For sharing.

Beyond us.

Love one another.

Which is why, when you leave here, you'll get a chance to sign a petition on behalf of some of the most vulnerable human beings in our nation - the preborn. Calling for justice on their behalf.
Because we love them.

And taking time to be part of the Pro-Life gathering on Parliament Hill on May 14. Yes, it will cost of your time. It may be rather inconvenient.
But we love them with the love of Jesus that goes beyond these walls.

And their mothers.

Which is why you'll have the chance to pick up a baby bottle on the way out the door today and support the work of First Place Pregnancy Centre as they care for vulnerable moms at a time of great need and uncertainty.

And I know - you're busy.
It'll be yet another thing to figure out in your already crammed mind.
But we love them with the love of Jesus that goes beyond these walls.
And so we do it.

We do it, gladly, because God through Christ calls us to do it;
He calls us with the message we have heard from the beginning.

Not just a New Testament, post-Jesus message, either.

The girls have heard this message echoed through the prophet Micah.
Many of you women here have gone through GEMS yourself.

And you may also have learned their theme verse -

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness
and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)*

The Lord requires it.....

Yes, a commandment.

Not an option like one you could order on your car - with or without sport pin-striping. Christian living with or without an attitude of love.
Not a chance!

The Lord requires

*Justice
Kindness
Humility*

Justice - behave in ways that are right, and help right the wrongs you see in the world.
That's the petition and the March on the Hill.
Seeking justice for the unborn.

Kindness - or as some other versions translate the Hebrew, *mercy*.
Showing compassion and care to others in need.
That's the Babybottle campaign on behalf of vulnerable moms.

Humility - Not trying to get attention for yourself by doing it; and being ready and willing to make a sacrifice for the sake of justice and kindness.

It's Micah's way of presenting the same timeless message that John presents:
Love one another.

You can love through seeking justice for
- those who have no clean drinking water by sponsoring a project through a reputable NGO;

- or those caught up in human slavery (did you know that behind drugs and weapons slavery is the biggest trade in the world?) – CPJ has some resources to help with this.
- or caring for the environment by helping your parents start a compost pile in the backyard.

You can love through showing kindness - showing mercy -

- when you help your friend with her homework, even when you're dog tired and would rather watch *America's Next Top Model*;
- when you agree to go to Extencicare to help bring some hope and comfort to the frail and elderly, even if such institutions make you feel uncomfortable.
- by donating to CRWRC's foodgrains bank program

Love one another.

It starts right here at Calvin Church in how we treat one another.

It affects how we behave as part of the city of Ottawa.

It goes right around the world.

It is active.

And it is non-negotiable.

It is Easter in action.