

## “WITH...love”

Scripture: Romans 13:8-10

Graphics: Stones, hands, togetherness, heart, sacrifice

Big Truth: The people of the Panama UMC are called to live out their salvation with a set of characteristics that accompany the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Focus Phrase: Love starts with being loved, then acting out love, then truly loving.

### 1. Introduction

#### A. Pray!

- B. This series of messages, we've entitled WITH, is about **five solid characteristics** of living out our faith in Jesus Christ...like five solid river stones you can hold in your hands.
- C. We've spent some time being challenged to live out our faith in Jesus WITH **humility**, WITH **peace**, and WITH **respect**. Humility is all about living out our faith somewhere between false pride and false humility. Peace is about being AT peace and sharing the peace of Christ with the non-believing world, so THEY too can know Jesus and know peace. And, last week, challenged to live out our faith by living WITH respect for the governing authorities in our lives.
- D. We have two more messages in this WITH series. This morning, we'll read Paul's message to the first-century church in Rome to live out their faith in Jesus **WITH love**...and then the last message will be WITH honor.
- E. Today, we'll start WITH love.
- F. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his treatise called On Loving God, wrote this: **“The more surely you know yourself loved by God, the easier you will find it to love in return.”**
- G. Love is not a destination. Love is not a milestone. Love is not some kind of badge or accomplishment. Love is not a legal requirement of any civic or even religious law.
- H. Love is a dynamic process that moves us from knowing that we are loved by God, discovering what it means to love others, and then actually engaging in the sacrificial love of God as shown to us in Jesus.
- I. As we live out our faith WITH love, we'll find that so many of the other things that we strive to do as Christians (humility, peace, respect, and honor) become second-nature to us.
- J. Our passage this morning is short...3 verses. Wahoo! But, like a river that is narrow and yet deep, the volume of water that river carries is pretty high. In these three verses, there's a lot of water flowing...a lot for us to see and understand, and then live into. Ready? If you're ready, say, “Let's go!”

- K. OK! Let's open our bibles to Romans chapter 13, starting in verse 8...
- L. In the previous section, from last week, Paul ended by saying, "Pay to all what is due them - taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is do."
- M. He then uses that metaphor to write this...verse 8...

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ ROMANS 13:8-10

- B. Here's the deal for Paul: if you owe someone taxes and you pay those taxes, then you don't owe them taxes anymore, until next year or next time. If you owe someone payment for something, and you pay them for that, then you don't owe them any more. If you owe honor or respect to someone, then pay that...and once you do, that debt is paid.
- C. Anyone who is a follower of Jesus is to satisfy or **discharge** all debts in a timely manner, as agreed upon by the two parties.
- D. When Paul says, "Owe no one anything..." he's reminding the church that they are to pay what's due...when it's due, and to satisfy the terms of what's owed. in that way, you won't be in debt to anyone else for anything...
- E. EXCEPT ONE THING, Paul says, "...to love one another."
- F. The debt of love to others is NEVER paid in full. In fact, in CANNOT ever BE paid in full, because you'll ALWAYS have a deficit of love to give others.
- G. It's like an eternal loan that never gets paid. You make a payment, and the principal balance goes up!
- H. It may seem like the mortgage we have on our Centerpoint addition is a huge amount and it'll never be paid off. I assure you, that debt WILL be paid before it's due. Your school loans will be paid eventually. Your mortgage will be paid eventually as you keep making payments.
- I. The debt of love a Christian has for other people - EVERY other person - will ALWAYS be...it will never be discharged, satisfied, or paid in full.
- J. Paul went on to say that the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
  - i. The law here is the Jewish Law, or Torah. BUT, Paul is not talking about satisfying the **letter** of the law, but satisfying the **INTENT** of the law.
  - ii. God gave the Jewish people the Law - the rules about how they were to live their lives - not so they could be perfect or so they could keep from making sinful mistakes. God gave the Jewish people the Law so that they could show their love for God AND be a light to the rest of the world to show them what it looks like to love God and love others.

- iii. Over time, the SPIRIT of the Law became the LETTER of the Law and the Jewish people lost sight of the commandment of God in Leviticus 19:18, which was, “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”
  - iv. So not only did they lose sight of loving each OTHER among the Jewish people, but they certainly lost sight of being a shining light to the world to show them how to love God and love others.
- K. In verses 9-10, Paul went on to explain what he meant by love fulfilling the law.
- i. He went back into the OT books of Deuteronomy and Exodus, which contain the 10 Commandments - the original commandments given to Moses for the Jewish people, at the very beginning of their relationship with God.
  - ii. Paul listed out commandments #6, 7, 8, and 10 about murder, adultery, stealing, and coveting.
  - iii. If you look at the 10 Commandments, you’ll find that the first 4 commandments are how the people were to relate to God...and the last six were about their interactions with each other.
  - iv. Paul uses 6, 7, 8, and 10 as important examples of what it looks like to satisfy the SPIRIT of God’s Law by NOT harming others or their relationships. Don’t sleep with someone else’s spouse. Don’t take someone else’s life. Don’t steal things that belong to someone else. Don’t jealously covet things that belong to someone else. He could’ve included honoring parents and lying against others as well.
- L. But here’s the problem that Paul highlights: these laws were not meant to be the be-all-end-all of how the Jewish people were to act. That’s why he adds, in verse 9, “...and any other commandment...” The other 6 of the 10 Commandments, any of the 613 additional rules the Jewish people received from God, AND, for the Christians in Rome, any of the 70 some commands that Jesus taught them.
- M. **It was never about the letter of the law for God.** It was never about discharging a debt to the law by avoiding violating a particular law. If someone successfully avoids violating a particular law, the letter of the law is observed. But, Paul went on to say, when someone loves another, the underlying SPIRIT of the law is fulfilled.
- N. And when the underlying SPIRIT of the law is fulfilled, then surely the letter of the law will also be fulfilled.
- O. Paul quotes Jesus when we wrote, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” That came from Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 22:37-39. If the followers of

Jesus would grow in loving anyone with whom they come in contact, then they would surely avoid the sin of breaking a commandment, a command, or, most importantly, the intent of the law, which, you'll recall, was to love God and be a light shining in the world to show others what loving God and others looks like...by example.

- P. Loving another is the fruit of the perfect intent of God's laws and commands to His people.
- Q. And not only that, but Paul ends verse 10 by saying that "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."
- R. It does not just FULFILL the law...but IS FULFILLING of the law. This is not a once and done thing, but an ongoing process of fulfilling the law by continuing to love, learning to love more, then loving more, then learning to love even more and then loving even more...
- S. It's a debt that is never satisfied and never discharged. You will never get a piece of paper in the mail that says, Paid in Full, when it comes to living out your faith WITH love.

### 3. Application

- A. And this love isn't love just within the Christian community. It's not just within the church. You and I are commanded by God to love those outside the church with the same intent and purpose as we love those in the church... maybe even more-so!
- B. Loving those who share your love of God is easy. But God showed his love for the world, including those in the church...but not just for the church.
- C. So, here's where we're going with our application this morning. Love is a three-point plan to show love to the world by loving God and shining a light to the world.
  - i. First, you must experience the true, sacrificial love of God in your life.
  - ii. Second, you must start practicing love for others, even before you have that love in your heart.
  - iii. Third, when you experience that love for others, you must embrace the sacrifice that it requires.
- D. Through that process, not only will you be fulfilling every law and every intent of every law, but the world will see the light of Jesus in you and me.
- E. So, what does it take to **experience the true love of God**.
  - i. This is a John 3:16 moment. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

- ii. We're tempted to think that when Jesus said, "For God SO loved the world..." that he meant that God loved the world **to such an extent** that he sent His son. The way to read that phrase is more like, "For God loved the world in such a WAY that He sent Jesus..." or "God ultimately showed the world what love was by sending His son..."
  - iii. Go back to St. Bernard's words, "The more surely you know yourself loved by God, the easier you will find it to love in return."
  - iv. You are loved by God. (pause) You. Are. Loved. By. God. (pause)
  - v. Stop pretending that God doesn't love you, brother. Stop rejecting God's love for you, sister.
  - vi. And press more and more into spending time experiencing the love of God, simply because God made you, and ultimately showed His love by sending His ONLY son to suffer and die by being crucified on a Roman cross. Through excruciating pain, God turned His back on His only Son. Yet, Jesus was looking at YOU...in your eyes saying, "I am doing this for you. Because I love you."
  - vii. It's time to experience the love of God today...
  - viii. And as you do, it's time to start living out your faith in Jesus and his sacrifice by loving God and loving others.
- F. Second thing, and this may offend, but, **Pretend like you love others (by acting like it)**
- i. Shane Raynor, of [ministrymatters.com](http://ministrymatters.com), wrote, "One of the most helpful tools I've ever used for ministry is a little philosophy that Methodist movement founder John Wesley picked up from a Moravian friend, missionary Peter Böhler. The year was 1738, and Wesley had not yet experienced his famous Aldersgate conversion. He was burned out and somehow couldn't grasp the concept of justification by faith alone. He told himself, "How can you preach to others if you don't have faith yourself?" John asked Peter if he should stop preaching. Böhler replied, "By no means." Then Wesley asked, "But what can I preach?" Böhler answered, "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith."
  - ii. Learning to love those around you starts with pretending to love those around you. You'll find that as you do, you'll learn to truly love those around you.
  - iii. Love is not something you can buy at The Walmart. Love is something that you discover as you practice promoting the highest good of others and not causing harm to them **IN JESUS' NAME!**
  - iv. Author J.D. Walt said, "If John 3:16 is the starting line (of the Christian faith), how might we speak of the finish line? Serendipitously, it can be

found in 1 John 3:16. "This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us; therefore, we must lay down our lives for one another." The primary and most compelling way the world can know the love of God is to experience it through those who claim to love him. If John 3:16 captures the first half of the Gospel. 1 John 3:16 shows us the agenda of the second half of the Gospel. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us, therefore we must lay down our lives for others. (1 John 3:16) Being loved and becoming love. This is the Gospel. But be clear - love is not soft, squishy, sentimentality. Love is hard, but love is the only true power and love can do impossible things."

- G. As you practice this new level of tough love - not emotion but a gritty attitude of getting your hands and heart messy in someone else's mess - then true experience of love WILL follow.
- H. That leads to #3 - **Sacrifice yourself in love to all.**
  - i. You'll know you're growing in this sacrificial love when you start not mind-ing loving yourself, and your neighbors (especially the pagan and unbeliev-ing ones), and your enemies, and creation, and God.
  - ii. And it won't be because someone is telling you to love, other than the Holy Spirit, who is certainly prompting you at every turn to keep growing in this sacrificial love.
  - iii. And it'll cost you something. That's when you'll have a sense that, through you, as Paul said, "love is the fulfilling of the law."
  - iv. God was willing to pay the cost of His son's life. He is willing to love you in that way. Are you willing to live out your faith with that sacrificial love?

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. "The more surely you know yourself loved by God, the easier you will find it to love in return."
- B. Imagine a church that lives out the faith we have in Jesus WITH humility and peace and respect. Imagine a church that lives out its faith WITH love...to BE loved, to learn to love, and sacrifice it all WITH love.
- C. Let me challenge you this week to stop and simply experience the love of God for you. You are loved.
- D. Then find 1-2 people who you don't think you've loved, and start acting like you love them...I pray that leads to a true sacrificial love for them.
- E. Let's keep working through 1 John 3:16 as we lay down OUR lives for others.
- F. With...love.
- G. Let's pray!