

“Missional Love: Boldly Active”

Scripture: 1 John 3:16-24

Graphics: heart, exercise

Big Truth: The love of God for the world was shown through the sacrifice of Jesus. That’s the first half of the gospel. The second half of the gospel is the faithful followers of Jesus loving others with God’s love. That love is boldly active and perfectly fearless. It’s God that gives us the boldness to love in truth and action. It’s God that perfects that love and makes us fearless to love others. This short series will help the people of Panama UMC do a deep dive into the mission of love we are called to have and show.

Focus Phrase: The missional love of God is boldly active.

1. Introduction

A. PRAY!

- B. So, maybe you’ve heard that there’s an ongoing discussion about whether or not the Olympic Games will be held this year.
- i. The 2020 Games, that were scheduled to be held in Japan, were postponed from 2020 to 2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, understandably. But now, there’s a push to hold the Games this year, with less athletes and very few spectators from other countries.
 - ii. There’s something about the Olympics Games that inspires us to strive to be more than we are. The athletes actively train hard to stand out in their sports. They’re some of the most active people on the planet. And most of them are only athletes at that elite level for 4 or 8 years. Yet, during their training and competing, they strive to perfect their skills - shot-put or running or shooting or rowing, this year, apparently, skateboarding. When they’re at the top of their game, they are fearless, even though they know that only 3 people can stand on the podium and, statistically, it probably won’t be them.
 - iii. They know their sport. They know their bodies and their competition. They’re boldly active and perfectly fearless. And they’re on a mission.
- C. As followers of Jesus, we TOO are on a mission. But OUR mission doesn’t have anything to do with Olympic Games. It’s doesn’t involve physical muscles or speed, thankfully. I still remember the end of my freshman year of high school, my football coach saying, “Maybe you should find a less aggressive sport.” LOL Ya...good plan.
- D. As fun and important the Olympics are to some, the mission of Jesus for His followers is not only important to the WHOLE WORLD, but is THE mission that can change lives for eternity...just like it’s changing yours and mine.

- E. The vision for the mission to make disciples - that calling - is to **love like God loves**. To lovingly give all those around us the opportunity to believe in and follow Jesus.
- F. Now, we've heard lots of sermons about loving...and even how to love and who we should be loving. Today and next week, we'll be doing a deep dive into what **missional love is** - boldly active and perfectly fearless...and even more so than any Olympic athlete.
- G. In fact, it's not too bold to claim that missional love is the second half of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - i. The first half of the gospel is found in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." This first half of the gospel is God's loving invitation to be saved from the punishment of our sin by God's grace through faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. It's the most amazing gift ever. But like the birthday presents we receive (thank you for that party after worship last week...that was fun!)...we can't just open the gift and not USE the gift.
 - ii. So, that leads us to the **2nd half of the gospel**, found in our scripture for today from 1 John 3:16, which says, "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us - and we ought to lay down our lives for one another."
 - iii. To give us some context, I'd like to show a short video by J.D. Walt, who was the chapel leader at Asbury Seminary while I was there, and now leads a publishing and discipleship ministry called Seedbed.
 - iv. **VIDEO/AUDIO (3:47)**
 - v. J.D. goes on in the video to encourage the church to be increasing in our emphasis to raise up a people whose missional love is boldly active and perfectly fearless in order to experience a new great awakening of faith in Jesus across the globe. It all starts with me...and you...and us.
- H. This message is entitled **Missional Love: Boldly Active**. Next week, we'll take a look at part 2 - **Missional Love: Perfectly Fearless**.
- I. If you're taking notes, here's what we want to remember as we go out today: ***The missional love of God is boldly active.*** (repeat)
- J. This isn't the Olympics...it's real life, here and now.
- K. Let's open our bibles to 1 John 3:16 and we'll start with the first two verses...

2. Scripture

A. READ 1 John 3:16-17

- i. This section of 1 John 3 is really a commentary on John 15:12-13, in which Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have

loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

- ii. The author of 1 John - who scholars believe is the same as the author of the gospel of John - gives us some more information here.
- iii. He said that we can know love by the fact that Jesus laid his life down for us. Notice that it doesn't say that we will just know what love IS by the sacrifice of Jesus. He said that we will KNOW LOVE - we will experience love and love others - by doing the same thing that Jesus did: sacrifice ourselves.
- iv. Now, disciples of Christ may or may NOT be asked to give their physical lives for others...but maybe. Many in the first centuries of the church DID in fact give their lives. People today, in some parts of the world, DO give their lives for the gospel. And, still others throughout history have given their lives to save others in many situations.
- v. So this isn't just a game on a field. This is where the rubber meets the road. And the question that comes to my mind is: would I be willing to give my LIFE - physically - to save someone else, or FOR someone else?
- vi. I would like to think so. But, the author of 1 John isn't really asking that specifically. He does, though, give the church an example about money or worldly goods. Sacrifice looks like this: if you, as a follower of Jesus, have money or goods, and someone in need comes into your life, and you refuse to help them, then do you have the love of God in you?
- vii. Now, this came about because it's widely thought that there were certain believers in the churches of the first century that were wealthy and weren't willing to share with those in need like they were instructed by Jesus. In Matthew 5:42, Jesus said, "Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you." Or in Matthew 19:21, "Jesus said to [the rich man], "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."
- viii. Sacrifice takes many forms...and love is at the heart of each of them if done in the name of Jesus. The author goes on in verse 18 to give us our mission...

B. READ 1 John 3:18-24

- i. The commandment is two-fold: to believe in Jesus, and to love one another. To believe is the command from John 3:16. To love is the command from 1 John 3:16.
- ii. But that's all easier said than done, literally.

- iii. In verse 18, we go back to school. The author addresses us as little children...students...those who are learning and growing as disciples.
- iv. “Let us love, not in word and speech, but in truth and action.”
- v. Now, he’s not saying we shouldn’t be loving with our mouths. We absolutely should. But he’s also saying that we shouldn’t JUST be loving with our mouths. Or, even more importantly, we shouldn’t just SAY we’re loving and not SHOW we’re loving.
- vi. So, missional love is love that’s put into action...in real ways in the world. And if that’s hard to fathom, start by giving to those in need and you’ll begin to know sacrifice which leads to knowing love like Jesus.
- vii. Clarence Jordan captured the concreteness of this everyday love and compassionate assistance when he translated in his Cotton Patch Version of 1 John 3:18 back in 1973: “My little ones, let’s not talk about love. Let’s not sing about love. Let’s put love into action and make it real.”
- viii. Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard made the point that Jesus was looking for followers, not admirers — he wanted people who would walk with him, do his work, and serve and love in his name.
 - a. One of Kierkegaard’s own parables told of a man who was walking down a city street when he saw a big sign in a window that said, “Pants pressed here.” Delighted to see the sign, he went home and gathered up all of his wrinkled laundry. He carried it into the shop and put it on the counter. “What are you doing?” the shopkeeper demanded. “I brought my clothes here to be pressed,” said the man, “just like your sign said.” “Oh, you’ve got it all wrong,” the owner said. “We don’t actually do that here. We’re in the business of making signs.”
 - b. We don’t do these things, he was saying. We just talk about them.
- ix. One of the challenges of missional love is that we want to love, but sometimes we don’t know how or where to love...or we get beat down by our own sin and failure to love God and others.
- x. The author commands us to love in truth and action...to be true about our love and to put that true love in action.
- xi. He goes on to answer the questions of our hearts: How will we know if what we’re doing is loving like God loved?
- xii. The answer is this: if the Holy Spirit is active in our lives, then when our hearts condemn us, we will know there’s something that’s not right.
- xiii. “God is greater than our hearts and knows everything...” it says in verse 20.
- xiv. So even though we may not have it all figured out, God does. And we can trust God to convict and correct us when we feel that pang of guilt or that

we're missing out on something when we ignore the leading of the Holy Spirit to love. Through conviction comes growth when we humble ourselves to learn from that conviction.

- xv. Yet - and here's the Good News: when our hearts do NOT condemn us - when we're truly acting in love - we'll KNOW IT because we will feel a boldness before God as we obey Him and love others from somewhere deep inside of us.
- xvi. And we will boldly stand before God, asking for more - who ELSE can I love, where ELSE should I go to actively love others inside and outside the church?
- xvii. The missional love of God is boldly active.

3. Application

- A. So what does this boldly active missional love look like in your life going out in to the world this week?
- B. I mean, if we're called to live out BOTH halves of the gospel - saved AND sent - then we're not called to just be loved and saved, but to have a boldly active love for the least, the lost, and the last.
- C. I sense that each of us has at least some discipleship work to do to love one another with bold action. Boldness comes from being assured that you're in the middle of God's good and perfect will. Action is when you're obedient to Christ's commands and showing love that isn't centered on you and your will.
- D. As much as we enjoy watching the bold action of Olympic athletes, their striving and winning is all about putting THEMSELVES on the podium.
- E. **Showing bold missional love is all about putting JESUS on the podium** - or throne in His case - so the world can not only SEE him but be drawn to him to be saved (John 3:16) and boldly love others (1 John 3:16).
- F. So, how do you get there...
 - i. First, it starts with **abiding in Jesus** in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. The second half of the gospel is not territory that half-hearted followers of Jesus will find tolerable.
 - b. It's only with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that followers of Jesus intentionally take on the task of increasing in sanctification.
 - c. Sanctification is most simply becoming more and more like Jesus throughout your life.
 - d. In order to know how to be more like Jesus, you must spend more time WITH Jesus...abiding in Him - reading about Him, praying with Him, worshiping Him, giving Him full access to your life.

- ii. Then second, **building your boldness of heart.**
 - a. I've recently started to fly drones. When I first started, I knew nothing more about flying a drone than the dismal failures of flying cheap toy helicopters that I bought for our son Ben for Christmas one year...when secretly, I wanted to fly it myself. It wasn't great...and we crashed a lot. But now that I have a drone that actually flies, I was super nervous about my first few flights...and a few close calls made me even more nervous. Now, though, since I've been flying for a few months, I'm gaining boldness and skill with flying. I can fly in the woods. I can fly over water. I can fly higher and farther than I did a few months ago.
 - b. The more you learn what real love is like and how to love (love that is true according to Jesus), and the less your heart condemns your lack of love for one another, the more **boldness** you experience.
 - c. The more boldness you experience in loving others, the more loving action you desire because the Holy Spirit never lets you sit idle.
 - d. Be bold!
- iii. And, finally **acting in love wherever you are.**
 - a. When you go to the grocery store, go with a bold love ready for action for each person you meet or see. Some you won't talk to, but that doesn't mean you can't love them.
 - b. Or work. Or home. Or church. Or on the street.
 - c. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)
 - d. And this isn't passive love. This is intentional, missional, boldly active love that goes to the other, sees the others' needs, and meets those needs.
- iv. Abide in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Grow in boldness. Act in love wherever you are.

4. Conclusion

- A. I'll be excited if we DO get to watch the Olympics this year.
- B. I'll be even MORE excited for one repentant sinner that comes to faith in Jesus simply because one person engaged in missional love that was boldly active.
- C. And because of that love, a life was changed...a family was changed...a community was changed...a WORLD transformed!
- D. Next week, we'll keep diving in with a love that's perfectly fearless. Perfect love casts out fear. That's the love of God! Come back, y'all!
- E. Let's Pray...