

Real Disciples (8): Love One Another

(1 John 3:11-20)

I. Introduction

- A. Michael Servetus was a physician, scientist & theologian during Reformation.
1. He questioned doctrine of Trinity as based on Greek philosophy, not Bible.
 - a. He also questioned the practice of infant baptism as unbiblical tradition.
 - b. And He believed in free will, denying the doctrine of predestination.
 2. He fled Inquisition in 1533 for Geneva, whose leader was John Calvin.
 - a. His writings almost contradicted Calvin as much as they did Catholics.
 - b. What would Calvin do with this strong, eloquent writer of Reformation?
 - 1) *He killed him!* Servetus was burned at stake on October 27, 1533.
 - 2) Sure, Calvin had political pressures and needed to be strong leader.
 - c. But he also believed that faithfulness demands we oppose all error...
“...above every human consideration, so that we spare not kin, nor blood of any, and forget all humanity when the matter is to combat for His glory.”
- B. Sadly, we haven't gotten a lot better dealing with one another in modern times.
1. We haven't had a good burning at the stake in awhile—at least not literally.
 - a. But it is sad how often believers feel justified in mistreating believers.
 - 1) Gossip is clearly a sin... unless its gossip about a false teacher
 - 2) Character assassination is wrong, unless they are a liberal or legalist
 - b. Being hateful, spiteful and mean spirited is OK if done in God's service
 2. Jesus never said that his disciples would be known by meticulous theology.
 - a. He never said the world will know we follow by how we oppose error.
 - b. He didn't say that the mark of disciples is heretic notches on their belt.
 - c. No, Jesus said the world would know us by our LOVE (**John 13:34-35**)
 3. **Question:** Is what the world sees when it sees Christians is our love?
 - a. One of our churches in Oklahoma decided to offer instrumental service.
 - 1) Other churches took out ad in the local paper denouncing the church
 - 2) They likely felt good about themselves; they were defending truth
 - 3) But what would the community think about disciples? Or Jesus?
 - b. The world know we are REAL or COUNTERFEIT disciples by our love

- C. The church that John writes had to decide who was really a real disciple.
 1. False teachers convinced them that faith in Christ wasn't really enough.
 - a. Jesus didn't really come in flesh; disciples don't really need to obey.
 - b. Focus wasn't really the cross but a philosophy that fit the world better.
 - c. False teachers had little use for any who disagreed—little need for love.
 2. So WHO was a real Christian? Just WHO was a disciple of Jesus Christ?
 - a. John thinks back 60 or so years before to a day when Jesus was reaching.
 - b. What Jesus had said, "*The world will know you are my disciple by love*"
 3. John will make TWO POINTS in our text today— the WHAT and HOW

II. WHAT: Love One Another (Reading: [1 John 3:11-15](#))

- A. This message of brotherly loves was "*from the beginning*" ([3:11](#))
 1. Unlike the false teachers, this was not some freshly minted new idea like
 - a. John stressed, "*I am not writing you a new command but an old one*" ([2:7](#))
 - b. His was same old gospel, "*For God so loved the world that He gave...*"
 2. Look at the power of Jesus' original teaching back in [John 15:9-12](#).
 - a. Jesus stresses God's love and His command is "*remain in my love*"
 - b. We remain in his love and have joy when we obey his command.
 - c. Command is "*Love one another*" ([v. 12](#)). Repeats command ([v. 17](#)).
 3. Back in 1 John, failure to love is compared to murder ([1 John 3:12, 15](#))
 - a. Do we need texts to prove that murder is wrong? ([Gal 5:21](#), [Rev 21:80](#))
 - b. Jesus takes the prohibition to a different level— HATE ([Matt 5:21-22](#))
 4. Part of the message from the beginning— being unloving is murderous!
- B. For John, there is something of a "*them versus us*" deal going on ([1 John 3:13](#))
 1. Jesus warns the world will hate us because of Him ([John 15:18, 17:14](#)).
 - a. We mentioned last week that persecution was coming to John's church
 - b. Last thing they needed was to "*bite and devour one another*" ([Gal 5:15](#))
 2. The same is true for us today—faith is hard enough in postmodern world
 - a. Hard to believe in this world—no objective truth, no real responsibility
 - b. It hard enough standing up for God; we don't need family tripping us!
 3. Our job isn't to correct every mistake we see in others—but to love them!

III. HOW: This Is How We Love (Read: [1 John 3:16-18](#))

- A. For John, this love of our brothers and sisters isn't theoretical nor hypothetical
1. This love sounds a lot like the other [John 3:16](#)—we are to love like Jesus
 - a. God's love in Jesus Christ became incarnate, concrete and real.
 - b. At the cross, God identified with us and shared in our sufferings
 - 1) Jesus said there's no greater love "*lay down life for friend*" ([Jn 15:13](#))
 - 2) Then he shows us a greater love— "*were still sinners*" ([Rom 5:8](#))
 2. John says that our love means "*lay down our lives for brothers and sisters*"
 - a. Phrase "*lays down his life*" is unique to John ([John 10:11, 15, 17, 18](#))
 - 1) Jesus emphasizes that His sacrifice was a completely voluntary act.
 - 2) Love means we will voluntarily lay down our lives for each other
 - b. John's solidarity is not ceremonial—secret handshakes and funny hats
 - c. We wrap lives around each other, meet each others needs—not abstract
 - 1) Child psychologist screams at kids writing in his wet cement walk
 - 2) Thought you liked kids? "*I do in the abstract, not in the concrete*"
 3. Our love for one another is not abstract, but concrete, real and sacrificial
- B. James talks about a declared faith that isn't real faith ([James 2:15-16](#)).
1. John uses the same example of real love—meeting real needs of others
 - a. Love John describes isn't warm and fuzzy feelings (those are nice).
 - b. The command to care for poor is given throughout the OT ([Deut 15:7](#)).
 - c. But John sees this as uniquely Christian, as following in Christ's love.
 2. Henry Drummond says this about love in *The Greatest Thing in the World*
The world isn't a playground; it's a schoolroom. Life isn't a holiday, but an education. And the one eternal lesson for us all is how better we can love.
 - a. John would agree; real discipleship is about "*how better we can love*"
 - b. Somehow we need to recapture the emphasis on this divine obsession
 - 1) Real disciples aren't ones with sharpest theology or moving worship
 - 2) Real disciples aren't those in biggest churches or trendiest programs
 - 3) Real disciples aren't ones who appear to be practically perfect people
 - c. Real disciples are the ones who follow Jesus and who love like He loved

IV. Conclusion

- A. Two old men walking by a lake, when a frog hopped across their path.
 - 1. One of the old-timers bent down and scooped the frog up in his hand.
 - a. Frog said, *"I'm not a frog. Kiss me and I'll turn into a beautiful princess"*
 - 1) Old man put the frog in his pocket and plodded on down the shore.
 - 2) His buddy said to him, "So, are you gonna kiss the frog or what?"
 - b. He said, *"There's plenty of pretty girls, but a talking frog's kinda unique"*
 - 2. A lot of our division, fusses and feuds a is over *"our distinctive plea"*
 - a. We somehow have to be different and distinctive from all other groups
 - 1) Can't change our music, organization or focus— won't be distinctive
 - 2) We can't work/worship too much with other groups—not distinctive
 - b. You want distinctive—how about a church that loves one another
 - 1) How about a church that meets needs, both it's members then others
 - 2) How about a church know in the community as loving like Jesus love
 - c. You talk about being distinctive—that kind of church is a talking frog!
- B. But what if we don't do it all right? What if we don't love exactly right?
 - 1. What if we open our arms to love and accept others a bit too widely?
 - a. What if in trying to love we aren't tough enough? Or too tough?
 - b. What if we try to love like Jesus and don't get it all done just right?
 - 2. John is way ahead of us, and he's got a word for us (**1 John 3: 19-20**)
 - a. How often we have fretted and feuded over issues of theology/doctrine
 - 1) What happens to us if we don't get all of that just right?
 - 2) What do we do with other disciples who don't it all right?
 - b. How are our hearts set at rest in his presence? *Only through love!*
 - c. God is greater than our hearts! *So let's trust him to work out details!*
- C. Who is a real disciple? For John, it all starts and stops with Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Disciples must have faith and believe Jesus came into the world to save us
 - 2. Our response to the love of Christ is simply to love as Jesus loved.
 - a. Real disciples work and worship and study and seek after truth.
 - b. But above all things and in all things, real disciples love each other!