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**Love or Hate?**

**1 John 3.11-15**

**Series: Blessed Assurance (Communion Series)**

**The Village Church**

**August 3, 2025**

- I. Introduction – **Black and White**
  - A. Communication in our world depends largely on contrasts
    - 1. Certain characteristics and qualities are distinguishable
      - a. And the best way to distinguish them is to highlight their differences
  - B. We do it all the time
    - 1. We speak of being happy or sad
    - 2. Success or failure
    - 3. Smooth textures v. rough
    - 4. Comedy or tragedy
    - 5. Silence or loudness
    - 6. Fire or ice
    - 7. We speak of youth v., well, where most of us are on the continuum of life
      - a. Someone once told me after I came to Shell Point, “I’m not getting old. I *am* old!”
  - C. Sometimes we have fun with these contrasts
    - 1. We put them together and pretend they describe the same phenomena
      - a. They are called oxymorons
    - 2. Here are some examples
      - a. Bittersweet
      - b. Jumbo shrimp
      - c. Devout atheist
      - d. Freezer burn
      - e. Ill health
      - f. Old news
      - g. Same difference
      - h. Working vacation
  - D. One of the most notable people who loved to have fun with contrasts in literature and drama was Shakespeare
    - 1. Soliloquy from Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, Scene 1
      - a. O brawling love! O loving hate!
      - b. O anything of nothing first create!
      - c. O heavy lightness, serious vanity!
      - d. Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
      - e. Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!
      - f. Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!

- g. This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
- E. The Apostle John loves contrasts
  - 1. His gospel is distinguishable from the other gospels – what we call the synoptic gospels – by his own unique literary qualities
    - a. Largely built on themes using memorable contrasts
  - 2. In the gospel of John, he speaks of
    - a. Light v. darkness
    - b. Truth v. falsehood
    - c. Life v. death
    - d. Above or below
    - e. Freedom v. slavery
  - 3. He carries on the use of such contrasts in his epistles
    - a. People enlightened v. people who walk in darkness
    - b. Sin v. righteousness
    - c. Evil v. good
  - 4. Even in the Revelation
    - a. He contrasts two cities – Babylon the Great v. the New Jerusalem
    - b. The corrupt v. the pure, and the nature of the world
- F. So, in John's writings we have very little gray
  - 1. Things are black and white
    - a. And because he expresses them the way he does, they grab our attention
  - 2. Kind of the way Tom Lehrer did back in the 60's in his satirical songs composed for the short-lived TV series That Was the Week that Was
    - a. In introducing a song for "National Brotherhood Week" he exposed our inherent capacity for hypocrisy when he said,
    - b. "... I know that there are some people in the world who do not love their fellow human beings, and I hate people like that!"
  - 3. Well, John, in our text this morning, captures our attention with some incisive words about love and hate as well
- G. **1 John 3:11–15** (ESV) —
  - 1. 11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
  - 2. 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.
  - 3. And why did he murder him?
  - 4. Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.
  - 5. 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.
  - 6. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.
  - 7. Whoever does not love abides in death.
  - 8. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

## II. **The Original Virtue**

- A. John begins this section by affirming the biblical admonition to “love one another”
  - 1. And when he does that, he brings with this admonition the weight of biblical history
    - a. He says that his hearers, and we as well, have “heard from the beginning” that we must love one another
- B. That admonition has roots all the way back to Moses
  - 1. **Leviticus 19:18** (ESV) —
    - a. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
- C. Certainly Jesus taught the very same thing, and echoed the authority of Moses in quoting the Pentateuch
  - 1. In answering a query about what is the greatest commandment, He says,
  - 2. **Matthew 22:37–40** (ESV) —
    - a. 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
    - b. 38 This is the great and first commandment.
    - c. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
    - d. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”
  - 3. So one of the two greatest commandments in the Law include this admonition to love one another
  - 4. The admonition is echoed by other NT writers as well
  - 5. Paul: **Romans 13:9** (ESV) —
    - a. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word:
    - b. “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
  - 6. **Galatians 5:14** (ESV) —
    - a. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
  - 7. James: **James 2:8** (ESV) —
    - a. 8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.
  - 8. So John, Jesus, Paul and James all appeal to the authority of the law to affirm this great truth
    - a. And as such, you should know that this is not just any command
    - b. This is a core value of the scripture, from beginning to end
- D. Jesus adds a new dimension to the command, however, in John 13
  - 1. **John 13:34–35** (ESV) —
    - a. 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

- b. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
  - 2. Jesus takes this old commandment
    - a. He raises the temperature on the commandment by giving it a qualitative character
    - b. “Just as I have loved you” – that’s the degree to which we should love one another
    - c. And then He adds yet another dimension – an outcome or result of such love
    - d. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”
- E. So, when John says that we have heard this from the beginning, he includes that we’ve heard this from expositions of the OT Law
  - 1. But also from the ministry of Jesus and the other apostles
  - 2. Or, as someone once put it, “this is stuff you should have learned in school had you been paying attention”

### III. **Its Antithesis**

- A. Then comes the contrast
  - 1. Love is contrasted with hate
  - 2. And John illustrates hate by recounting what is most likely the earliest episode for learning about love and hate
    - a. The story of Cain and Abel
- B. **Its Appearance**
  - 1. **1 John 3:12** (ESV) —
    - a. 12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.
    - b. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.
  - 2. It’s no coincidence that the appearance of hate emerges so soon after the appearance of sin
    - a. Sin is inseparable from hate
  - 3. When the human race rejected the reign and rule of Almighty God, we were immediately plunged into the hatred of God’s image
    - a. An image which resided originally in the created human being
    - b. And which, even in our sinful state, still retains elements of that image
  - 4. Sin is by nature a hatred of God
    - a. And it is an easy step to hate that which bears His image
- C. **Its Origin**
  - 1. The original hater, of course, was Satan
    - a. This fallen angel who led a rebellion against the reign and rule of God in the heavenly realm
  - 2. But what we see hear is that Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, is said to be “of the evil one”

3. That, of course, doesn't let Cain off the hook
    - a. He's responsible for his own rebellion and hatred of God
    - b. But his diabolical disposition and act place him in league with Satan himself
    - c. He is "of the evil one"
  4. It's not inappropriate, although it doesn't fly very well in our culture, to claim that those who are committed to hatred in any form are, like Cain, "of the evil one"
    - a. Hatred is satanic, however it is expressed
    - b. And our world is filled with hatred
    - c. Even as that hatred is expressed with venom and emotional excess
    - d. Or more subtly, through acts under the radar to undermine or destroy the good that someone might do
  5. Cain's murder of Abel was a satanic act if there ever was one
- D. **Its Motivation**
1. And then, there is Cain's motivation
    - a. The fact that an evil act is satanic doesn't mean that there aren't very real human motivations for those acts
  2. "And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous"
  3. Here again, is another John-contrast
    - a. Evil v. righteous
  4. And the deeds in question had to do with worship
    - a. How worship was prescribed in those primordial times
  5. Sacrifices were offered
    - a. Abel was a shepherd – and he brought sheep
    - b. Cain was a tiller of the soil – a grower of vegetables
    - c. And Cain brought some of his produce
  6. At first glance, that seems reasonable
    - a. But evidently there was something wrong with Cain's sacrifice
  7. While the Genesis text doesn't say, I think it goes beyond merely a bad attitude
    - a. Or even that he brought defective plants
  8. Remember, once Adam and Eve sinned, God found their fig leaf coverings insufficient
    - a. And God provided coats of skin and clothed them
    - b. God required an animal sacrifice
    - c. The death of an animal – which set the stage the for sacrificial system under the old covenant
    - d. Because ultimately, atonement could only be made for human sin through the death of a substitute human
    - e. Fulfilled, of course, in Jesus
  9. So what should Cain had done?
    - a. Well, he should have purchased the proper sacrifice from his brother!

- b. They traded all the time, I'm sure
  - c. Abel had to eat vegetables and grain, and Cain had to eat protein
  - d. But Cain insisted on doing it his way
  - e. And as we know, "I did it my way" is the song they will be singing in hell
- 10. So God commended Abel and his offering, but He rejected Cain and his offering
  - a. This evokes jealousy and envy on the part of Cain toward Abel
  - b. He can't stand that his brother performed better in this central dimension of worship
  - c. Worship rooted in God's demonstration, through the emergence of the sacrificial system, that in His grace, God would provide for the salvation of humans who believe in Him
  - d. Abel had worship right; Cain did not
  - e. And that made Cain a hater
- E. So love of one another is proclaimed as central to the essence of the Christian life
  - 1. A core value in scripture
  - 2. And its antithesis, hate, is then illustrated using Cain's murder of Abel
  - 3. Cain's act was satanic, motivated by his own behavior in contrast with the obedient, righteous conduct of his brother

#### IV. The World's Hatred

- A. Jesus then goes on to elaborate on the spread of hatred
  - 1. And Cain and Abel become the model of the common relationship between Christians and the world
- B. 1 John 3:13 (ESV) —
  - 1. 13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.
- C. Cain hated faithful Abel
  - 1. Therefore, don't be surprised that the world hates you, believer!
- D. The world can't stand the righteousness of genuine believers
  - 1. And while the sins of the world vary over time, when Christians stand against the world's wayward norms, it is common for there to be persecution
  - 2. One of the sins du jour in this day and age is the supposed capacity of humans to choose their own genders
    - a. And when Christians point out the obvious reality – using basic science – we are called bigots
    - b. And are subject to all kinds of vicious attacks
  - 3. The same has been evident for decades in the fight against abortion – the killing of human lives in the most sacred space for human development – the womb
- E. Jesus was quite explicit about the relationship between believers and the world
  - 1. John 15:18–23 (ESV) —
    - a. 18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

- b. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.
    - c. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. ...
    - d. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also.
- F. So, there should be no surprise when you find that the world hates believers in Jesus
  - 1. It's a story as old as time itself
    - a. Dates back to Cain and Abel
  - 2. But is a central element in the Christian faith
    - a. Because the world hated Christ
    - b. It will hate you too!

V. **The Assurance of Love**

- A. But now, what's interesting is that right in the middle of this attention-getting contrast between the commandment to love and hate illustrated by Cain's murder and the world's hatred of believers
  - 1. Is a wonderful assurance policy
    - a. Not insurance policy
    - b. But assurance policy
- B. **1 John 3:14** (ESV) —
  - 1. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life,
  - 2. because we love the brothers. ...
- C. Remember, 1 John is about becoming assured of salvation
  - 1. **1 John 5:13** (ESV) —
    - a. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,
    - b. that you may know that you have eternal life.
- D. And remember, the name of this communion series is Blessed Assurance
  - 1. And that we've seen John give us a series of tests to help us know that we belong to the family of God
    - a. The test of love
    - b. The test of obedience
    - c. The test of truth
    - d. The text of abiding
  - 2. And here, he brings us back to the text of love
  - 3. "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers"
- E. Remember what Jesus said
  - 1. **John 13:35** (ESV) — 35 "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
  - 2. Not only will we know we have passed from death to life, that we have eternal life

- a. So will everybody else!
- 3. The number one criteria for you, and anyone who observes you, has for judging whether or not you are saved is whether you love one another!
- F. Now, some people are easier to love than others
  - 1. But neither Jesus nor John are concerned about that
  - 2. They don't say that you can be assured of your eternal destiny if you love those who are easy to love!
    - a. No! It's your love for all your brothers, all your neighbors!
    - b. Even the ones you disagree with
    - c. Even the ones who challenge you
    - d. Even the ones, yes, who hate you!
  - 3. Love them, and that's your assurance!
  - 4. Remember what Jesus said about the quality of love for neighbor we are to portray
    - a. "As I have loved you, you are to love one another"
  - 5. How did Jesus love you?
    - a. He gave up his life for you
    - b. He died in your place!
    - c. Even when you were a rebellious sinner!
    - d. Even when you hated God, and wanted nothing to do with God
    - e. That's when Jesus loved you!
  - 6. And that's how we are supposed to love one another, and love our neighbors
    - a. The easy ones and the hard ones
  - 7. That's when we will know we have passed from death to life

## VI. Love v. Death

- A. Finally, John reminds us of the gravity of this commandment to love one another
- B. 1 John 3:15 (ESV) —
  - 1. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer,
  - 2. and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
- C. This echoes what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount
  - 1. Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV) —
    - a. 21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'
    - b. 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.
  - 2. Murder is the logical conclusion of hatred
    - a. For you to hate another is to wish he or she were dead
    - b. And to wish you had the opportunity to do the deed, if you the wherewithal to do it, and knew there would be no consequences
- D. Do you have animosity toward anyone?
  - 1. May this be the time that you confess your sin to God and repent



2. Remember what else Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount
3. **Matthew 5:23–24** (ESV) —
  - a. 23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,
  - b. 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go.
  - c. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
4. Jesus says this right after He says that if you're angry with your brother you are in danger of the fires of hell!
5. Maybe you should consider this admonition before you participate in the communion service
- E. We're going to take a moment for some silent meditation
  1. We're going to ask the Spirit of God to reveal to us whether we have any animosity toward anyone that needs our confession
  2. It matters not whether the object of our animosity is wronged us in any way
    - a. Or if they happen to be on the opposite side of the political spectrum from us
  3. And it matters not that they be people that we know personally
    - a. Or whether they are a public figure whose rhetoric is inflammatory against our own values
  4. Do you have any hatred, any animosity, against anyone that you need to confess before you receive these communion elements?
  5. And if you are prompted by the Spirit that you need to go to anyone and ask their forgiveness for any attitude or action
    - a. It is not at all a problem for you to let the elements pass you by
    - b. And not participate in this service until you have been reconciled
- F. Silence

## VII. Conclusion

- A. It's an old message, an admonition, a command, that dates from the very beginning
  1. Love one another
- B. The contrast is sharp
  1. It involves hatred devolving into murder
  2. Rooted in jealousy and envy
- C. A hatred that is to be expected from the world which hates Jesus
- D. But the more we, by the Spirit of love, are able to love one another
  1. The hard loves as well as the easy loves
  2. The more we have assurance of our eternal destiny
- E. These communion elements are emblems of the love of Christ for us
  1. The communicate the extent of the love we are to have for our brothers and sisters
  2. As we receive them, let us experience the presence of the loving Savior