

SUMMER of LOVE

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

1 John 2.12-17
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I. Connecting With One Another

What are some of your favorite things about the season of Summer? If you could arrange it, would you like to have Summer year-around? Why or why not?

II. Introduction to this Series and Study

John's letter is very direct and to the point. Jesus is the light of the World, he has come into the world, and he calls people to live in the light - not just with Jesus but together as a community of faith. That community, John insists, is to have a common understanding about Jesus - he is fully God and fully human. It is to be a community of love for one another. It is a community that exists to shine the light of Life into all the world.

Our passage this week, 1st John 2.12-17, takes John's call to community a step further. First by offering a tender, pastoral reminder of the nature of relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and second, by issuing a strong imperative, "Do not love the world..." This serious call takes some unpacking and applying to ourselves and our world today. Doing so will better enable us to live out our call to Connect with God, Grow in Faith, and Serve in Love.

III. Study the Text

- a. Read through 1 John 2.12-14. What strikes you about the way John addresses his readers in these verses? How do you picture John - his heart, his concern, his priorities - as he writes these things?
- b. Why do you think John uses this form - that is, two sets of three statements that are repeated and addressed to three groups of people?
- c. Who do you think John is addressing as:

1) dear children = _____

2) fathers = _____

3) young men = _____

Do you think these references to the various "age groups" have to do with chronological age of the followers of Jesus or levels of spiritual maturity, or something other?

In addressing these people John cites certain qualities of each group that define something about membership in the community of faith. What two things does John state that mark each of these "groups"? Try to define what these phrases mean.

1) dear children = _____

2) fathers = _____

3) young men = _____

Note: John is serious about identifying the marks of true membership in the faith community. As we have seen already he has referred to those who denied the humanity of Jesus, who claim to be

followers of Jesus but do not live like Jesus, and those who say they are Christians but don't love other believers. Here he identifies attributes or qualities of those who are faithful - trusting Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, knowing that Jesus is fully God ("him who is from the beginning"), overcoming evil by the power of God's Spirit, being strong in faith, and having the word of God living in them.

- d. How is a common theological understanding and a shared desire to know God more deeply significant for developing a community of faith? Can there be true community when there is significant disagreement on core theological beliefs?
- e. Look at 1 John 2:15-17. Here's where John gets very serious. In fact, the opening phrase, "Do not love the world or anything in the world" is the first time in the letter that John uses the imperative form of the verb - "Do not." It's a direct command. The Greek word, "kosmos" is translated "world". Here's the rub - if God created the world, and called it good, if Jesus came to save the world (John 3:16) why should followers of Jesus not love the "world"?
- f. In the New Testament, "kosmos" refers to both the world God created and declared to be good and the world where sin has led to values, beliefs and behaviors that are opposed to God and his purposes. Which "world" John is commanding Christians not to love? What three descriptions does he cite about this world and its values (verse 16)? How would you paraphrase those three?
- g. According to verse 17, why is this world and its values, beliefs and behaviors incapable of giving life as God intended? How is doing the will of God capable of giving that life?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Look at Romans 12:1-2. Are you aware of ungodly influences from media that you are allowing to shape you? What steps can you take to re-program your mind, your values, and your patterns of behavior that are not consistent with the will of God for you?
- b. How can you be like the "young men" John addresses, that is, are you willing to ask the Holy Spirit of God to deepen your commitment to Jesus, to allow God's word to live in you and shape you, and overcome evil and its influence upon you? How can you help your family do this?
- c. Would you rather have Jesus and the life he offers than any earthly pleasure, possession or accomplishment?

V. Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Pray for Good Shepherd's continued work of discernment, especially lifting up our Discernment Working Party, the pastors, elders and leaders of our church to be led by God,
- b. Ask God's Holy Spirit to guide the children and families of our community into the realization of who Jesus is: fully God and fully man!
- c. Lift up this study of 1st John, that through it God would make Himself known as we connect with Him, grow in Him, and serve Him and the people He loves.

The world attracts and ensnares and is ultimately passing away... God's desire is that no one should be destroyed, but that all should repent and believe the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus came into the world and overcame that world through his perfect obedience to the Father's will. We need not drift on the world's tide... nor love the world too much... but understand that love for this world means surrendering every part of our own lives to Jesus Christ as Lord... only such thorough commitment can adequately express the love we owe him for all he has done for us.

D. Jackman, The Message of John's Letters: Living in the Love of God