

SUMMER of LOVE

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

1st John 2.7-11
June 15th & 16th, 2013

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I. Connecting With One Another

Have you ever tried tiptoeing through a dark house and tripped over something? What was it? Did you hurt yourself? Anyone or anything else?!

II. Introduction to this Series and Study

This weekend we continue our study of 1st John in a series we're calling 'Summer of Love.' As we have already seen, John's definition of "love" - the *Christian* definition of love - is quite different than our world's! As we saw last week, the kind of love John is describing is not just an emotion, it's not just a feeling, it's an action!

This week's passage follows closely on the heels of last week's, further developing what it means to know, abide, and remain in the love of Jesus. While last week we discussed what it means to "walk as Jesus walked," this week John heightens the metaphor by introducing language of darkness and light.

III. Study the Text

- a. Our passage this week is 1st John 2.7-11, but to get it's full significance, first reread last week's passage - verses 3-6 - then continue on through verse 11.

What questions come up as you read these verses together? What is the significance of darkness and light? How do these metaphors extend John's encouragement to the church?

- b. In last week's study we encountered the word "command," which we unpacked by looking at John 15. In these verses, John uses the word again, explaining that it's not a new command, but an old one, though it's new - which is a more than a little confusing!

What do you think John's getting at here? How can it be new and old at the same time!? Is he distinguishing between Jesus' command and his writing? Or is he thinking all the way back to Leviticus 19.18?

How do you think John's "new command" connects with the phrase "the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining"?

One commentator notes,

"In the Gospel that newness had a temporal significance; the command to love was new in the sense of novel or only now promulgated. Now that signification is no longer valid; temporally speaking the commandment has become old. Yet it can still be called new, for it belongs to the new age of God's reign that has appeared with Jesus. This new age is light (because the light shines in darkness; John 1.5) and the new commandment typifies this light. It is light for seeing, walking, and living."

How (if at all!) is that helpful in connecting the two metaphors?

- c. As we've seen before, the Letter of 1st John engages and regularly comments on the Gospel of John. While we've been discussing following the commands of Jesus in general, flip over to John 13.34-35 and 15.1-17, noticing especially verses 12 and 17, to see the specific command John is referencing.

What specific command is Jesus referring to? Why do you think he instructs His disciples to do so not once, but twice!?

Notice how other writers of the Christian Scriptures continue this theme of loving one another: Romans 12.9-13, 13.8-10, Galatians 5.13-15, Ephesians 4.1-6, 1st Thessalonians 4.9-12, and Hebrews 10.19-25.

- d. Read Matthew 5.43-48, noticing Jesus' command in verse 44.

We saw above that Jesus commands his followers to love one another (in the church), and yet, here He commands that his followers love everyone - even enemies!

Why do you think Jesus explicitly instructs us to love both fellow believers and enemies? Why didn't Jesus just say, "love everybody, okay"?

Do you think there are Christians throughout the centuries who have had enemies (of one sort or another) *within* their church!? How do you think Jesus would want them to treat one another?

- e. Reread 1st John 2.9-11.

John has written, "the true light is already shining." How, then, could someone "walk around in the darkness"? What does this mean for John? What does this look like (for instance, what ways do we treat each other that are metaphorically like "walking around in the darkness")?

How do you understand the phrase "make them stumble" with reference to John's light/dark metaphor?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. How have you seen "the darkness passing and the true light already shining" in your walk of faith? In the lives of others?
- b. The Christian Scriptures declare that love fulfills the entire law. What do you think they mean? What kind of love is this!? Is this the Beatles' "Love is All You Need"? Why or why not?
- c. What actions can you take to love others in our community of faith better?
- d. Who in our church do you have hard time loving? How do these words of John convict you? How does the Spirit of God encourage you to love them better?
- e. C.S. Lewis once stated, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." Does this quote help you understand 1st John 2.7-11 - and live a life of love?

V. Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Pray for our ongoing denominational discernment process, that God would guide Good Shepherd,
- b. Lift up those whom you have hard time loving: Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal God's love to them and to move in your heart to show them love,
- c. Ask God to prepare our hearts to worship as we gather this weekend, guiding our leaders to lead us, that we might worship "in Spirit and in truth."