

Brotherly Love

Listening to the Apostle of Love

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Bible Text: 1 John 2:7-14

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Well, it's great to have you in our services today and I want to thank you so much for coming today. If this is one of your first Sundays here we want to be the kind of place where it's easy to connect and the way that we do that around here in part there's a connection card on the back of the program you received when you came in. If you can fill that out if you're new or you haven't introduced yourself to us before with whatever information you are comfortable sharing at this time. That just gives us an opportunity to connect with you. We're kind of like an electrical socket; we want to be a place where it's easy to connect. We'll provide the socket, you've got to decide when you want to plug in. But we want to make it as easy as possible for you because so much of the Christian life is lived out through community. It's lived out through relationships and so fill that out if you would and it would give us an opportunity to begin establishing that relationship with you.

This morning we're going to be celebrating the Lord's table together and we don't typically do that on Sunday morning but we're going to do it today. And maybe to set the stage, you know, a lot of us this summer have been to a number of weddings, we've enjoyed that. Some of us have regrettably had to attend some funerals and so as you think back over the summer, some of the events you went to were things like that. Well, this morning we're inviting you to attend a resurrection or a celebration of a resurrection of Jesus Christ focusing on the Gospel: the good news of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. The Bible doesn't tell us as a local church how frequently we ought to have the Lord's table. That's why different churches do this differently, in fact, the closest thing we have to instruction on that matter is 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes," so we would understand that to mean that there ought to be some level of regularity and frequency in the way that we remember the Lord's table. For us generally, we have with the Lord's table at our church family nights which are typically the first Sunday night of the month. In fact, we have a church family night tonight at five o'clock and that's when we would typically do that but as we were planning our preaching and ministry schedule for this year, we actually had a couple of Sunday mornings and this is one of them where we wanted to have communion as part of our morning church services and I'll explain a little bit more of the details later on. But we are trying since we have five different

worship services here at our two different campuses, we're trying to make each one of these services feel more and more like a church family.

Now to introduce what we're going to be focusing on this morning, please open your Bible to 1 John chapter 2 and if you don't have a Bible with you, just pull out that one from under the chair in front of you and turn to the back to the New Testament to page 185 and that will bring you to 1 John 2. And what I'm going to be doing this morning, we're going to be actually interspersing several different teaching segments along with some additional singing and then actually participating in the Lord's table together. You know if you have been part of our church for any period of time that the annual theme we've selected this year is "Loving Our Neighbors." Loving our neighbors. We don't just want to talk about that, we want to do it and we believe God is a very precise God and the Bible is a very specific book so we don't want to talk about a fuzzy without thinking about how do we believe the Lord wants us to accomplish that. And so we have been focusing this year on five key ways to do that. One, is to implement our soul care initiatives to achieve deeper friendships within our church family. So if we are going to love our neighbors, let's start with the people we're going to church with. That's why I want to encourage you to be back at five for this church family night where we do a lot of body life things together. You don't have to be a member of our church, it's just an opportunity for us to spend time here and then over at the Community Center strengthening those relationships and I certainly hope by now at this point in the church year, you would be able to say, "You know what? Because of certain choices that I have made, I have better friendships with some of the people in our church family and thereby I'm loving my neighbors more." You see, because one of the difficulties in the Christian life is, sometimes we say we're doing things when the evidence would suggest otherwise. Would it be okay for me to say that this morning? Let's just be honest about it: we're in God's house and he knows. So let's just let his word have the impact that it desires, it's designed to have, to change us.

Well, then secondly, as individual church members, grow in our ability to build stronger relationships with those that live right around us. If we're going to be serious about loving our neighbors, well, let's love our literal neighbors and so I hope you can point to specific steps you have taken in the last eight or nine months to grow in the implementation of that particular aspect of our theme with your literal neighbors.

Third, developing our parish mentality to especially serve those who live right around our ministry campuses and God has placed us here and on the West side for a particular purpose with the persons who live right around us. So how are we seizing on our location? And I'm really glad for a lot of very specific work that has been done this year to accomplish that.

Then fourth, launching our Faith Community Development Corporation to serve urban neighborhoods with excellence. Essentially, God has given us two suburban campuses and we're marshaling suburban resources to meet urban need. The city of Lafayette has asked us to do that and if the city would be that open to a faith-based organization helping to revitalize urban neighborhoods, my, oh my, oh my. If we're going to say we

love our neighbors at all please, tell me we're going to be all over that. And there's some very exciting things happening on that score and some additional things in the mix right now that just take your breath away to see what God can do with a group of people who are serious about loving our neighbors.

And then, constructing the first phase of our Senior Living Community because in this culture that wants to throw away people after they reach a certain age, where is the loving your neighbor in that? So the church better live a different message, huh? So I'm really excited about this Senior Living Community that's being developed out here on our property to make a statement about what God thinks about those who are older and what the church thinks about loving those who are older.

So we want to take practical steps of growth this year in loving our neighbors, right? That's the call. Well, would we all agree with this? That's a struggle. Can you be honest in the church house this morning? It is a struggle to love our neighbors. Why? Because I would just rather love myself, that's why. I'd rather just order my life around what's best for me, and what serves me, and what pleases me. Right? So we recognize that something radical has to happen to us if we're going to love our neighbors at least in a way that would be pleasing to God. Something radical, radical like what? Well, starting with establishing a personal relationship with the Lord. You have to admit our innate selfishness which is just one of the many symptoms of the sin nature with which we were born. You say, "I don't like that." Well, then you don't like your Bible very much because you don't have to open the pages of Scripture very far before you are confronted with the fact that we are born spiritually dead. Now think about that truth in light of our annual theme. We can't just paste the wax fruit of loving our neighbors on a tree that is decaying. We can't paint whitewash on a tomb as Jesus once said. That means there has to be a new birth.

Now there has to be a point in time where I admit my sin and you might say, "Americans don't like to do that." It doesn't matter. Welcome to the Gospel. You have to admit your sin and place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ the Savior and Lord and that decision is so important it happens at a point in time. That decision is so important that it's described with dozens of different metaphors in the Bible to be sure that we understand what that means. Metaphors like "regeneration" where we are literally given new life in Christ. You see, we have to have that in order to accomplish this theme, it's called forgiveness where your sin is cast as far as the East is from the West. Why would that be important? Because you're not freed up to love your neighbors if you're drowning in your own guilt and shame, that's why.

It also involves imputation. There's an interesting theological term. Which means the righteousness of Christ is now part of your identity. Which is why the Apostle Paul would say it in verse like 2 Corinthians 5:21, God the Father, "made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that," look at the hina clause, the purpose, "so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." You start to get a feel for how it would be possible for people like you and me to actually overcome our innate selfishness and learn how to love our neighbors in a way that would be pleasing to God, that when you

start stacking up all that the Scriptures says about what occurs when a person places his or her faith and trust in Christ. We've been seeing other metaphors in our study of 1 John where we learn that Jesus Christ is our advocate, meaning he argues on our behalf. He's our propitiation, meaning he is the satisfaction of the just penalty of our sin. You see, the message of Scripture is there's incredible power to this position of being in Christ. So you don't think about the practice of loving your neighbors apart from relishing your position in Christ. Regeneration, forgiveness, imputation, Jesus being our advocate, our propitiation, our being in Christ those are some of the Gospel indicatives of who you are in him.

Now another metaphor that is often used by John is that you can actually know God. You can know him. If you know your Bible well, you know that John actually used several different Greek words that are translated "know" in English. You can know God, oida, objective knowledge, it's a fact. You can know God ginosko, experientially, the evidence proves that you know him but ultimately, a very intimate concept purposely so. Think about the person you know the best and the person who knows you the best. Think about all that's involved in that relationship of knowing them and the Bible says you can know God like that. That's why the Apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 2, "This is good," you had better believe this is good. It's good news. "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." We can know God because of the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ. And the point is this, where's all that going? Here's the point: knowing God makes it possible for people like you and me to progressively overcome our selfishness and to learn how to love our neighbors in a way that pleases the Lord which is why periodically that we would pause and celebrate what Jesus has done for us at the Lord's table because Jesus makes our annual theme possible. That's the point: the Gospel makes taking steps towards achieving our annual theme possible.

Well, this fall we've been studying through the book of 1 John verse-by-verse. That's the way we do it. That keeps us off a hobby horses if you're wondering, "Why is he talking about that today?" It's because it's the next thing in the text. If it happens to get you right in between the eyes, it's not because your wife called me. You're going to have to go higher up the tree than that to the Holy Spirit of God and fussing at him is a really bad idea. And so we've been working our way verse-by-verse through the book of 1 John. We're calling this "Listening to the Apostle of Love" because that's what John was known for. So far we've talked about proven love from the initial verses of the book and then authentic love from verses 6 through chapter 2:2. Last week, cautious love and this morning we're going to talk about brotherly love. And to get a running start let's begin at chapter 2, verse 3. But let me just give you a word of warning: this passage takes some real twists and turns so right now be sure you're not looking at your goofy cellphone, be sure you're not thinking about lunch because you're going to have to concentrate on, what is it that you have in your hand there? The word of, Steve? The word of God. Well, if he's talking, you ought to listen up, huh? So carefully follow through because God trusts you enough right now to use your brain to think through what is it that he's trying to communicate to you this morning.

1 John chapter 2 beginning in verse 3 and be looking for this outline as we read. You'll see it I think: the longevity of brotherly love and then the direction of brotherly love and then the inner generational power of brotherly love. What a great text. 1 John 2, beginning in verse 3,

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. [We saw that last week.] 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; [Wow, that's pretty powerful.] 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. 7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, [What? That's what he says.] which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. 9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 12 I am writing to you, [You're going to hear this six times.] little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

No doubt about the theme of these verses, huh? John's talking to us about brotherly love and I hope that already you're evaluating in your heart and mind what are some of the ways I'm not loving my brothers well. You see, don't make the mistake of saying, "Here's all the ways I'm doing it." We can justify ourselves pretty quickly. Right now I'm asking you to think about: are there any ways I'm not loving the people that God has placed around me well? And how can the Gospel help me do that better? You know, something that I've noted over the years at funerals is that many times the songs that you're singing just take on so much additional meaning because of the nature of that event. I think that's true today as we're celebrating this resurrection if you're concentrating on worship. Are you doing that? The question isn't: did the worship team do a good job? The question is: did you do a good job? Did you know that? And I hope you're singing to those who are around you with gusto. I realize some of you cannot carry a tune in a bucket but you can carry whatever tune God gave you loud and that's one of the problems at evangelical

churches is we've gotten to the point of we're coming to see the worship team do the show. Wrong. And we're coming to sing to one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs and on a day like today with music like that, I hope you're singing it and singing it loud. In fact, we'd like to have to do some architectural work later on this week for the cracks you put in the roof because you raised it.

You notice that Jesus begins this discussion by talking to us about the longevity of brotherly love. There's no question that there are some aspects of what John said in these verses that makes you want to scratch your head and you realize that's there on purpose. Nobody would've heard or read these verses ever without realizing John's giving us some sort of a biblical brainteaser here. In verse 7, "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you," you say what? That's it's intended focus, to get you to concentrate, to get us to think. Why? Because we're not always that disciplined in our minds. You know, I have to check my email. I have to plan my lunch. I've got to blah blah instead of concentrating on the word and so we have the creativity like that right before us to help us slow down and try to comprehend exactly what is being emphasized.

Well, let's try to untangle this with these three questions. What kind of love is even in focus here, this brotherly love? What kind of love? And then, in what sense is brotherly love old? And in what sense is brotherly love new? Well, what kind of love is in focus? It's important to know in Bible times there were at least four different words in the Greek language that could be translated with the English word "love" and that's important to know because the New Testament was originally given to us in Greek. One of those words was eros. Of course, we get our word "erotic" from that. Erotic love. Nothing wrong with that kind of love being enjoyed within the boundaries of monogamous marriage. It was created by God and it's good, really good. Nothing wrong with that at all but that word itself is never found in the Scripture. There is also the word storge, that too for whatever reason is never found in God's word but it was used in their culture. The third word is the word phileo that means friendship love, fondness, closeness. Of course, the city of Philadelphia comes from that word which means the city of brotherly love. I went to graduate school in Philadelphia. Not everyone who lives there apparently knows the meaning of that word. That's where it came from, the city of brotherly love. Friendship love, fondness, closeness but the most significant word for "love" in the Bible by far is the last one, the word agape or the verb form agapao. That word means sacrificial love, giving love. And the same author of this epistle used it in his Gospel in what is probably the best-known verse in all the Bible. In John 3:16, "For God so," what word do you think that is in the original language? Agape or agapao. "For God so loved the world," and notice the juxtaposition because this defines love. "That he," felt a particular sense of fondness to you on the cross? There's a whole lot more than that, baby. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." That's a perfect picture of agape love.

Now in our text in 1 John 2, which word would you suspect as translated "love"? It's the word agape and here's what that means, bottom line, I've said a lot but please get this: one of the tests of whether a person is a genuine believer in Christ is whether they have evidence of sacrificial giving love towards others. It's not just the fondness. There's nothing wrong with that. The test is whether there's any action involved and it's amazing how many men say, "Well, I love my wife," where is the evidence? Don't say it unless you're doing it. "I love my husband. I love my kids. I love my parents, blah,blah,blah." It's easy for us to say things, isn't it? When it's all said and done, there's a whole lot more said than done and that's why we come to the church house and we let his word through his Spirit help us to think about, "Is that really true of me and in what ways is it not?"

And so the kind of love that is in focus is agape kind of love. Now in what sense is it old? John says, it's kind of unusual, "Beloved, I'm not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old command is the word which you have heard." What does that mean? Well, it means God has always commanded people to love others even as far back as the book of Leviticus. Leviticus 19:18, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD." So this command is old in the sense that God has been telling his people that for a long, long time.

Well then, in what sense is it new? How can it be both? Well, what does your text say? "On the other hand," John says, "I'm writing a new commandment to you which is true in him." There it is. "Which is true in him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." So the command to love others is new because of the impact Jesus Christ had on the command. You say, "What? What do you mean by that?" Well, you can think about that in three ways: Jesus Christ elevated the command to love others. What do you mean elevated? Well, he's the one who looked at the command to love God and to love others and said, "What about them?" "On these two commands all the rest of the law and prophets hang." No one had ever said that before, elevating the importance of loving others.

He also exemplified this command. By his life our Lord showed us in living technicolor how to love others. For example, what did people say as they observed Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus? "My, how he loved them." I wonder if people were hanging around us this week how many times they would they have said, "My, how he loves her. My, how she loves," not just because there was some fondness going on but because there was evidence of sacrificial love. Watch the way you function with people who are imperfect at work. Read that email. Listen to that text. "My, my, how he loves them." You see, he exemplified this command and he also extended this command. The Jews were willing to buy the idea that you should love your brothers, "Okay, I'll do that that," but what did Jesus also say? Not just your brothers, you're supposed to love your neighbors which means anybody around you in need, illustrated in stories like that of the Good Samaritan. Now he's extending it and it wasn't just a matter of loving your brothers and loving your neighbor's in need, he even went so far as to say, "You're supposed to love your," you don't even want to say it, do you? "To love your enemies." You see, he extended the command. So on the one hand, yes it's old. God's people have always been told to love

others but it's simultaneously new because of the impact of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and what that had on the command. He elevated it, he exemplified it and he extended it.

Now what's the bigger picture? I know I've said a lot but where is that really trying to take us logically? The answer is we're talking about a concept, brotherly love, with great longevity in the plan and the program of God. Yes, giving and sacrificing to meet the needs of others is an old commandment. It's always been part of God's program. It's a new commandment because of the impact his Son's life and ministry has on our ability to grow in that area and when you choose to do so, here it is, you can be sure you're not just part of a fad. This isn't something that's going to go out of style. This is not a theological hula hoop. No wonder this would be one of the tests of whether a person truly knows Christ as Savior and Lord.

One reason I like having served at the same church for nearly 27 years is the privilege of watching some men and women love their brothers and sisters for a long, long time. There's beauty in longevity. Seeing some people serve in our children's ministry for decades. I was running with somebody yesterday and he was talking to me about a couple who teaches his children in our Wednesday night Kids of Faith program right now and he was just expressing thanks for that couple and the impact they're having in his children's lives and I thought to myself: that couple has been serving in children's ministry for decades. Not days, not months, not even years, decades. Longevity because they love people.

Watching parents love their children, even if in some cases that child is going astray out of obedience to this command of love for however long it takes, longevity. Do you realize we have deacons and their families who are serving in that role when Chris and I came here and they're still loving in that way? People working in our counseling ministry for decades. Spouses loving one another. People loving their community. People transitioning from one ministry over time to a different service opportunity but each one characterized by love for the brethren.

In a minute we're going to participate in our morning offering. I rarely talk about money around here because thankfully I don't have to but this church was built and continues to function humanly speaking by men and women who faithfully give and in many cases have done that for decades. They are the real thing. Their checkbook when they start to write that check, their checkbook if it could speak says, "I know where this one's going because I've seen this before." Month after month, after month, year after year after year. Incredible sacrifice. Are they getting something out of that? No, they want people here and around the world to be exposed to the Gospel, to biblical truth, to resources, to serve them in whatever way is necessary. You see, it's a command that's old. It's a command that's new. They're the real thing.

You know, our passage this morning not only speaks about the longevity of brotherly love, it's both an old commandment and a new one, but John also emphasizes the direction of brotherly love. You see, the principle is hating others, did you ever do that?

When do you do that? How do you do that? With whom do you do that? Hating others leaves you in darkness. John says in 1 John 2:9, "The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now." Verse 11, "The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." The image John is trying to call up here is very clear, isn't it? That we've all been in that situation metaphorically speaking when we're stumbling around in the dark. In fact, that happens literally from time-to-time. It's happened to me quite a few times in this very auditorium. Because there's times I'm here late at night by myself and I'm trying to get from point A to point B. Obviously it's dark in here and I'm not going to bother to turn on the lights just to get through here and generally I'm starting at this side anyway and the lights are in the back so I try to navigate my way through the auditorium. Well, you say, "What's so hard about that?" In the dark you ought to try it because those aisles are angled. That could be very interesting in the dark and I've had some rather spectacular falls in this auditorium, at least stumbles, right here because I was walking in the dark. It's one of those where you get yourself righted up and then you say, "Did anybody have a camera?" You're just hoping in this electronic media age that no one caught that one on video. Back in the old days, some of you are old enough to remember this, we had oak pews in this auditorium. Oh my, did that hurt when you cracked your knee on the corner of one of those pews trying to walk in the dark.

Well, John's point is that happens relationally. Stumbling around because of hatred where a person is controlled by their hateful anger and they're saying and doing things that are just directionless. They're just stumbling around, stumbling around. Or a person is hurt and they're seething with bitterness and putting all their focus and energy on hurting the other person back. How does that conversation seem now in the light of day? Or just so consumed with jealousy and envy that they have no idea where to turn or what to say or do. They are stumbling around in the darkness relationally and it is a pitiful thing to observe.

Genuine followers of Jesus Christ can testify that loving others makes your path sure. That is so true. You can always ask this clarifying question in any situation: how can I love this person right now? But they disappointed you. "I know, but how can I love them?" But they hurt you. "I know, but how can I love them?" They made you mad. "I know, but how can I use this energy that comes with this anger to return good for evil? How can I love them?" And that doesn't mean, by the way, that at times you don't have to do hard things. Sometimes love means to confront and sometimes love means bringing consequences to bear. Sometimes love means you have to take hard steps but the motivation even then and, by the way, only you and God know this, the motivation even then is love.

And John's point is: here's one of the tests of whether a person genuinely knows Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Do they love the brothers? Do they love the people that God has placed around them? Can I ask you: how are you doing on this particular test? My guess is there will be some who will hear this message and the fact of the matter is, not very well and because it's evidence you don't genuinely know Christ yet. Well, let the word of God and let the Holy Spirit of God do the anticipated, intended work this

morning to draw you to a place where you would admit your need and place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Now on the other hand, when you get a group of people who are followers of Jesus Christ and who are trying to grow in brotherly love, who are trying to walk in the light, I'm telling you, it's delicious. It is a delightful thing for sure in part because of the contrast in the hate filled world in which we live. You turn on the news to find out who bombed who, or who murdered who, or who invaded who, who stole from who. In other words, who hated who. Well, walking into the church house ought to be a breath of fresh air, huh? In part because the love of God is being perfected in us as we joyfully and sacrificially obey God's command to love one another. There is light, there's direction that comes when a group of people are trying to do that together. It's interesting, when I make some sort of mercy ministry call how frequently the person will say, "My adult Bible Fellowship is already on top of that. Thanks for calling Pastor Viars, my small group, they beat you to the punch. So-and-so was already over here helping me. We received all sorts of cards, all sorts of calls. We feel so loved by the people of our church." There's just so much direction. You're not stumbling around in the darkness when you're practicing brotherly love.

Last Sunday and I'm a little bit hesitant even to use this illustration because I don't want people to think that I expect this kind of treatment but here's just how that worked out in my life last Sunday morning as an example. If you saw me walking out to my Jeep after church, I had my hands full. One hand was filled with some produce from one of our member's gardens who thought if they had some, I ought to have some. God bless them. I did and our family enjoyed that this week and why did someone do that? Just because they love me, just because they love me. Here's what I had in my other hand, I had a cart of those right their. Now some of you don't even know what that is. Which makes me question whether you're saved but let me before I judge you, let me just explain those are bass baits. You understand those are bass baits. You say, "Why did you leave the church house with a cart of bass baits?" Well, because I was talking with one of our members after the first service last Sunday morning and I was telling him that I was going to take my blind son Andrew and Chris up to Bethany Farm Sunday afternoon and we're going to fish for some bass. I asked him because I know he fishes there too how he had been doing and he said, "It's a little slow right now. I haven't been able to catch them on much but what's really been working for me is a particular kind of artificial worm." We just finished that conversation and I didn't think anything else about it until I got back after the last service and there was a whole card of those exact same worms on my door. And what that man had done is he ran back home because he had some extra ones, ran back home and got them and put them by my door to be sure that we would have an effective time of fishing Sunday afternoon. Let me just tell you, that's love right there. And there's direction. You see, you're not talking about stumbling all around in your relationships with other people. When you're practicing brotherly love it is a delightful and a delicious thing.

Now if you would say, "Well, I have trouble loving others that way." Join the club, huh? We all would say wouldn't we, we have trouble practicing brotherly love. Well, that's

where the Lord's table comes in. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ lives in me and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." So as we think about the people with whom we struggle to love, the occasions on which we struggle to love, the responses that often happen that lack love, let's run to the cross. Let's run to the cross and let this reminder of what Jesus has done for us put us in a position to love others more.

You know, I realize I'm notorious for not finishing my stories so that I don't have to answer 100 emails on this question, did you catch any fish Sunday afternoon? What do you think the answer to that is? Absolutely and to hear Bear tell it, "It was a huge bass, a huge bass." But when you're blind it can be whatever you want it to be. But you realize, I really believe that we were able to do that, have that kind of joy as a family because one of our brothers loved us and you also recognize that ultimately that was Jesus loving us through him. And it's a little thing but when you have a handicapped child, it's a big thing, it's a big thing. And for that brother to love me and our family that way last Sunday so spontaneously, so delightfully, somebody had to die. Praise Jesus that it makes it possible for us to love others well.

Paul said, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"

John ends this particular passage of Scripture by talking about the inter-generational power of brotherly love. You may have noticed in verses 12 -14, I tried to point it out as we were reading. John used that phrase "I am writing" or "I have written" six times and he addresses three very distinct groups of people: little children, older men, and then younger man. We might think in that first category that John was talking about literal children but when we compare it to other places where John uses the phrase, he's talking about believers in general. So these statements are to three categories of people, all followers of Jesus Christ, then those who were older and then those who are younger. What did he say to all followers of Jesus Christ? He said, "Their sins have been forgiven for his name's sake and they know the Father." You see, something that helps us avoid the sin of hate is to remember that well, maybe he or she sinned but I sin too. That'll lead to brotherly love. What we're celebrating today, Jesus didn't just have to do this for those bad people. He had to do this for we bad people and that will help us to get off of our self-righteous, judgmental, high horses and love even when it's hard.

He also said: remember this about older believers in verse 13, he said, "They know him who is from the beginning," and in verse 14 he said, "They know him who was from the beginning." You say, "Did you get that right, Pastor Viars?" Yup. What's John trying to emphasize? These people around here with gray heads, we have to love the fire out of them because they've known the Lord for a long, long period of time and we desperately need them. This philosophy of ministry among some churches that we're just going to try to be hip and we're just going to care about attracting the younger crowd and everybody else is just a throwaway, we don't want or need them, that is incredibly foolish and that

has practical implications. Some of you who are younger, you know when we're singing a song that isn't exactly the style you like, it's not quite upbeat enough for you, welcome to that one's not for you. You got that? I'll give you a little pastoral hint, here's what you do before you get too wound up about that: just take your hands and cup it just like that. You smack yourself upside the head until you have figured out that we need older people around here. That's in the original Greek, by the way. We need them, we need them for sure. You older people who just like that one, there's more. Remember this about younger believers: they've overcome the evil one. Aren't you glad for younger ones who have come to know Christ? We need them, we need them bad. They're strong. We need their strength. The word of God abides in them and they have overcome the world. So when there's a song that we're singing that's a little bit more upbeat than you like, do you know what you need to do? Not your palm, there will be damage done. We'll have to call 911. Just take a finger. Kind of give yourself just a little nip to remind yourselves that we need to love them too. So go up and hug them. Say, "Man, that tattoo that really looks good. I might get one of those myself." Love them and when you say, "That's hard." Well, somebody died to make that possible and the good news is he's alive, that's how powerful that is.

Let's pray together shall we?

Father God, thank you for this service where we can remember your wonderful sacrifice for us, so we can look forward to your return, Lord. Lord, help that govern how we live and love each other. Now Lord, help us to be characterized in our lives the way that you are characterized, Lord. Help us love our families, our church families, our neighbors, and even those, Lord, who would differ with us. Lord, help us do this because we have been forgiven of our sins and we know you and you know us and you are our Father and by your strength we have overcome the evil one. Lord, thank you that this unites us generationally together in fellowship. Lord, help us love each other through generations. Lord, help us do it in a way that brings you glory and honor. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.