

Sermon followed by Service

May 5, 2024

1 John 5:1-6

Every time. Every time, I tell you. Every time. Every time I preach on love, it seems that week I get tested and tempted. It goes something like this: I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. Then someone comes along, something comes up. It doesn't have to be evil; it doesn't have to be trouble; it can be a gift from God. At another time, with a better attitude, I might welcome that someone, that something, that gift from God. But whenever I preach on love, someone, something comes along that gets in the way of what I'm doing, that pushes my buttons, that stresses and stretches me beyond what I think I should have to handle ... and I show me and my world what a bleep I can be. And I wonder: Why does the God-lived life have to be so hard? Why does God-lived love have to be so hard? Is it the devil tempting? Is it God testing? Is it just me being me? And the answer is probably: "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

Do you find God-lived love hard? If not, why not? If so, why?

Why is the God-lived life so hard? Why is God-lived love so hard? I'll give you the easy answer: we live in a world turned in on its self, sometimes chased and chasing to satisfy its cravings (no matter how dark and twisted they might be); sometimes driven and driving to fix the world without God. We live in a world turned in on its self. Why? Because we've fallen for the lies of the devil who says we're better off on our own than with God, that our way is better than God's way, that our love is better than God's love, that whatever I think love is is better than what God says love is. We live in a world working to

surround us and fill us with its cravings, a world working to distract us and cut us off from God. That's the easy answer.

How do the cravings of the world surround us?

How do the cravings of the world distract us from God?

There's more to the answer. And this is not so easy. Why is the God-lived life so hard? Why is God-lived love so hard? Because there is a part of me that would rather satisfy my cravings than sacrifice myself to love. There is a part of me that would rather fix my life and my world my way myself than look to God and be part of God's fix. In other words, there is a part of me that likes the devil's lies better than God's truth. So when someone comes along, or something comes up that gets in the way of me and my comfort, me and my convenience, me and my plans, me and my pride, me and my idea of me - because I'm so wrapped up in me and my world, I'm not ready with God, and the voices, the fixes, the answers I hear are the voices, the fixes, the answers of the world and its ruler, the Devil - lie and deny, blame and excuse; "it's your life, live it the way you want" - blah, blah, blah. Me - that's a big part of why the God-lived life is so hard. Me is the big part of why God-lived love is so hard.

When we hear "Me is the big part of why God-lived love is so hard," what is your first response? And then your following responses?

So what's the answer? Instead of listening to the voices inside, instead of listening to the voices out there, listen to Spirit of Christ in John: **"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and**

will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ... My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” When the God-lived life is hard, when God-lived love is hard, and we fail and fall short, here is the way to God’s life and love: “Father, forgive me.” Then what? You get to know you have Jesus speaking up for you - not lying or denying, not blaming or excusing, but pointing to the cross - your sins are paid for, pointing to your baptism - you are washed and made alive with Jesus for life right with God.

What is your favorite reminder that you are forgiven?

That’s where we get to go when someone comes along, when something comes up, and our love stinks. That’s where we get to go when the devil and this world tempts and we fall. That’s where we get to go when God tests and we fail. In Jesus, we are forgiven, purified, set right with God.

Some people stop there. They say something like: “I’m forgiven, and God loves me just the way I am.” And they like that so much they add: “And I love God just the way I am.” Never mind that part of the way I am is the work of the devil and that Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil. Never mind that Jesus says: “Deny yourself and follow me.” Never mind that part of God’s response and solution to the way I am is: “Repent.”

John doesn’t say: “I’m forgiven, and God loves me just the way I am.” John doesn’t add; “And I love God just the way I am.” No, John has better for us than living and loving “just the way I am.”

Instead of “I am the way I am,” with Jesus, we have a new identity. We aren’t our old selves doomed to relive our past; we aren’t our weak selves who can’t help it; we aren’t the people of the world suckered by Satan to think “I have to live my way or I don’t matter, I have to live my way or I can’t feel good about myself”; we aren’t people of the world wrapped up in ourselves and controlled by our cravings and guilt, our insecurities and our pride. No, that’s not us. And so we don’t have to live that way. We are born of God. And we get to live that way.

How have you seen someone’s perceived identity (whether real or not) affect their thinking, feeling, and living?

How does your perceived identity (whether real or not) affect your thinking, feeling, and living?

Born of God, we get to live like we have a Father - “our Father who art in Heaven” - who loves us as his own. Born of God, we get to live like we have God Himself watching out for us, listening in for us, ready to step in for us. Born of God, we get to live like we have Jesus here with us, even in us, and at the same time, Jesus up in heaven preparing a home for us. Born of God, we get to live like we have the Holy Spirit inside us, connecting us, powering us for life with God. Born of God, we don’t have to settle for “I am the way I am.” Born of God, we don’t have to settle for “it’s just me being me.” Born of God, we don’t have to settle for loving with that kind of love.

What does it mean to you that you are the dearly beloved of the Father in heaven?

What does it mean for you that you have Jesus and his Spirit with you and in you?

Born of God, get to live like we will overcome the world; better, born of God, we get to live like we have already overcome the world. We get to live like the world out there can't stop us, or get us, or control us; we get to live like the world in here [in us] can't stop us or control us. Born of God, we get to live with the life and the love of God.

How? Born of God, we love God's people. How? By loving God and keeping his commands. And how do we love God? By keeping God's commands. At one time, that was the sermon I was going to write for today - we love God by keeping his commands. I think we can see how keeping God's commands is love for God. But how is keeping God's commands love for God's people? That could be a whole sermon; we'll talk about that more in Family Bible Hour.

Which is more important to God - to love him or to obey him?

How do people set the two against each other?

Why do people set the two against each other?

Which is more important to God - obedience to God or love for God's people?

How do people set the two (obedience to God and love for God's people) against each other?

Why do people set the two against each other?

In what ways is obedience to God's commands love for each other?

But first, what can I count on this week? My love will be tempted. My love will be tested. And sometimes this week, my love will sputter and fail. But there is something else we get to know. We get to know the love of God that forgives us in Jesus. And we get to know the victory of Jesus that overcomes - that overcomes the world out there, that overcomes the world in here - so we can live life and love with God. Amen.

May 4 & 5, 2024

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... for so many it seems that loving God is little more than having a positive thought that God will do something nice for them.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see that loving God is so much more - loving God means we keep his commands. Loving God means we love to keep his commandments; we love to do what God wants. It may not always be easy, but in that life, we are winners with Christ!

OPENING HYMN

“Welcome, Happy Morning”
Hymn 469

“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say;
“Hell today is vanquished; heav’n is won today!”
Lo, the dead is living, God forevermore!
Him, their true Creator, all his works adore.

Refrain

“Welcome, happy morning!” age to age shall say;
“Hell today is vanquished; heav’n is won today!”

Maker and Redeemer, life and health of all,
God from heav’n beholding human nature’s fall,
of the Father’s Godhead you, the only Son,
mankind to deliver manhood did put on. *Refrain*

Source of all things living, you came down to die,
plumbed the depths of hell to raise us up on high.
Come, then, true and faithful, come, fulfill your word;
this is your third morning— rise, O buried Lord. *Refrain*

Free the souls long prisoned, bound with Satan's chain;
all that now is fallen raise to life again.
Show your face in brightness; shine in ev'ry land
as in Eden's garden when the world began. *Refrain*

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you form the minds of your faithful people into a single will. Make us love what you command and desire what you promise, that among the many changes of this world, our hearts may ever yearn for the lasting joys of heaven; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

1 John 3:18–24

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 89C



1 Love will be our song for - ev - er, faith - ful love from
 2 Heav'n and earth a - like af - firm it: LORD, you are mag -
 3 Once, when Is - rael lacked a lead - er, Da - vid was the
 4 Now, though, we have felt your an - ger; now we find dis -



a - ges past: love en - shrined with - in a prom - ise made by
 nif - i - cent! E - vil pow'rs and hid - den forc - es you have
 man you chose; an ex - alt - ed throne you gave him, and re -
 as - ter near. Shame is ours in - stead of tri - umph; neigh -



you and sure to last; hu - man tongues and an - gel voic - es
 ren - dered im - po - tent. At your throne of love and jus - tice
 lief from all his foes; e - ven when your reb - el peo - ple
 see our plight and sneer. How much long - er till you hear us?



join in rev - 'rence and de - light, prais - ing your un -
 we ex - tol you, faith - ful King: blest are those who
 scorned your ways and spurned your law, still your prom - ise
 Life is short, so swift our days! Lord, re - new the



ri - valed splen - dor, lov - ing LORD, the God of might.
 learn to trust you— they have am - ple cause to sing.
 shaped the fu - ture: love en - dur - ing ev - er - more.
 love you prom - ised— fill your peo - ple's hearts with praise.

SECOND READING

1 John 5:1-6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands.

And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

1 John 3:1

Alleluia. See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! Alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 15:1–8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Fruitful Trees, the Spirit's Sowing"

Hymn 595

Fruitful trees, the Spirit's sowing, may we ripen and increase,
fruit to life eternal growing, rich in love and joy and peace.

Laden branches freely bearing gifts the Giver loves to bless;
here is fruit that grows by sharing, patience, kindness, gentleness.

Rooted deep in Christ our Master, Christ our pattern and our goal,
teach us, as the years fly faster, goodness, faith, and self-control.

Fruitful trees, the Spirit's tending, may we grow till harvests cease;
till we taste, in life unending, heaven's love and joy and peace.

SERMON

1 John 3:18-24

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.



PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: O Lord God, our strength, our song, and our salvation, you fulfilled your promises by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

C: **Thanks be to God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

M: In your compassion you sent Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life to rescue the lost.

C: **Drive out all doubt and gloom that we may delight in your glorious triumph.**

M: Lift our eyes heavenward to see him who lives to make intercession for the saints, and grant us confidence in the greatness of his power. Keep before us the vision of your redeemed people standing before your throne and singing the song of victory.

C: **Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive wisdom and power and honor and glory and praise.**

M: Make us instruments of your peace as we bring the good news of hope and new life to those around us. Guide us in the use of all that you have entrusted to us: our time, our talents, and our treasures.

C: **Risen Lord, live in us that we may live for you.**

M: Merciful Lord Jesus, grant healing to the sick, and strengthen the faith of the suffering and the dying. Assure them of your abiding presence, and comfort them with the hope of eternal life.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: Gracious Father, you have restored to us the joy of your salvation. With happy hearts, we come before you and say:

C: Alleluia! Thanks be to God! Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them up unto the Lord.

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: It is good and right so to do.

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

Therefore with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus*

O holy, holy, holy
Lord God of pow'r and might,
Your glory, earth and heaven
In countless ways recite.

Hosanna! Come and save us,
Lord God of hosts on high,
And in your grace and mercy
Receive our fervent cry.

Hosanna in the highest!
How truly blest is he
Who in God's name is coming
To set his people free!
He comes to bring salvation
And with his blood outpoured,
Deliver us from bondage—
Hosanna, mighty Lord!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei* (Sung)

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; Have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; Have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
Grant us your peace. Amen.

CHOIR

"Cornerstone"

By Toby Mac

*Lookin' out my window, feelin' the crescendo, Sunset on a quiet sea
Sitting with the ones that I'll forever love We're waitin' on a flash of green
And even when the nights got cold You have always held me close
You're the only rock that I could ever stand on You're the only one for me*

*The sun goes up, the sun comes down This old world keeps spinnin' 'round
I'm here travelin' down this long and winding road Seasons come, the seasons go
They take me high, then leave me low But I'm still standin' on the only rock I know*

You're my cornerstone Oh, oh, oh, no matter where I go, my cornerstone

*Bible by my bedside, sweatin' through a long night Wrestling the hounds of shame
Trying to turn the hands back on a troubling past Every move I make's in vain
But even in the shifting winds You are who You've always been
You're the only rock that I could ever stand on Through it all You remain*

*The sun goes up, the sun comes down This old world keeps spinnin' 'round
I'm here travelin' down this long and winding road
The seasons come, the seasons go They take me high, then leave me low
But I'm still standing on the only rock I know*

You're my cornerstone Oh, oh, oh, no matter where I go, my cornerstone

Oh, oh, oh, no matter where I go

[: On Christ, the solid rock I'm standing. All of the ground is sinkin' sand.:]

On Christ, the solid rock I'm standin' Yes, oh, Lord

You're the only one that I would build my life on Through it all you remain

*The sun goes up, the sun comes down This old world keeps spinnin' around
And I'm here travelin' down this long and winding road Seasons come, seasons go
I've been high, and I've been low But I'm standing on the only rock I know*

*You're my cornerstone Oh, no matter where I go, my cornerstone
Oh, no matter where I go The sun goes up and the sun comes down
And I'll be on my rock, on this solid rock, oh yeah*

You are the only rock I stand on.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"Draw Near and Take the Body of Your Lord"

Hymn 661

Draw near and take the body of your Lord,
and drink the holy blood for you outpoured.
Saved by his body and his holy blood,
with souls refreshed we give our thanks to God.

Christ our Redeemer, God's eternal Son,
has by his cross and blood the vict'ry won.
He gave his life for greatest and for least,
himself the off'ring and himself the priest.

Let us approach with faithful hearts sincere
and take the pledges of salvation here.
Christ, who in this life all the saints defends,
gives all believers life that never ends.

With heav'nly bread he makes the hungry whole,
gives living waters to the thirsting soul.
Lord of the nations, to whom all must bow,
in this great feast of love be with us now.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”

Hymn 932

Sent forth by God’s blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from his dwelling take leave. The supper is ended;
O be now extended the fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of his teaching, receptive souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for God and for all. His grace did invite us;
his love shall unite us to work for God’s kingdom and answer his call.

With praise and thanksgiving to God ever-living,
the tasks of our ev’ryday life we will face. Our faith ever sharing,
in love ever caring, embracing his children of each tribe and race.
One bread that has fed us, one light that has led us
unite us as one in his life that we share. Then may all the living
with praise and thanksgiving
give honor to Christ and his name that we bear.

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