

The Real Life: Love Matters - 1 John 3:11-18 – 23 Nov 2014

So, if you have your bibles, please turn with me to the book of 1 John and chapter 3. It's going to be a passage of Scripture found in verses 11-18 that we are going to look at this morning. 1 John chapter 3 verses 11-18.

As you know, I have two sons and they love the outdoors. One of the favorite places Shawn and Matthias love to go is this beach at Pelawan. This is in Sentosa and Shawn and Matthias love to go there. Shawn loves to go there because he loves to pick up these sea snails and this week, as usual, we went to Pelawan Beach and, along the way, I saw this first sea snail shell on the ground. I picked it up. And Shawn immediately grabbed it from me and says, 'Daddy, this is a dead one. It's not alive.' 'Whoa,' I said, 'Shawn, you are quite good, hah? You look at this and you know this is a dead one and not alive. How do you know that, Shawn?' He says, 'It's very easy, Daddy. Turn it around.' And so I did. And I realize he is right. He says this is dead because there's nothing you can see inside the shell. But I'm not so sure whether he got it right so he went on a search to look for a live sea snail. And within a minute, he got back and he says, 'Daddy, look at this. (The underside of a sea snail was imaged on the screen). This is the one that is alive.' And if you look at it closely, you will see this kind of a creature - soft, slimy thing. He puts it on his arm and says, 'Daddy, look at it crawls.' My son is absolutely right. He was able to tell if this sea snail or this shell is really one that is belonging to something alive or is it just a dead external shell because he flipped it over and saw what was on the inside.

The book of John, or 1 John, really is about identifying if you have life on the inside because, on the surface, all of us have a kind of a shell - we come to church, we sing the songs, we listen to the preaching of God's Word, but is there real life in you? Well, you got to flip it around and inspect and examine it. It's really not that difficult. If Shawn could identify something that is dead or alive on a shell, you and I, today, can also identify if there is real life in us. John, in this passage, in this book of the Bible really tells us how. He gives us two very basic premises. He says, first of all, God is light (1 John 1:5). God is Light. Very, very simple. At the very same time, John also tells us God is Love (1 John 4:16). This is not rocket science. God is Light and God is Love. And so, if God lives in you then you will walk in the light and you will walk in love. This is exactly what John says in verse 10 :

'whoever does not practise righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother'

His premise is very simple. How do you know if you have the light of God? Well, ask yourself : Are you walking in the light, are you practising righteousness and are you walking in love? Do you love your brother? We've covered the first aspect, somewhat, last week. And so, today, we are going to focus on the second aspect which is to love your brother. Do you have eternal life? Do you have this Zoe, this life from God? How can I tell? Ask yourself : Can you see the love for the brothers and sisters in your life? See, this is what he repeats in verse 11 :

'For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.'

And then again, in verse 14 :

'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers...'

This is how you know. You don't look at whether you go to church, you don't look at whether you have a Christian name, you don't look at whether you are born in a Christian home. You look at yourself, if you love the brothers and 'whoever does not love abides in death'. How do you know you have Zoe? Ask yourself if you have love. In fact, this motif of love is the commonly repeated word in 1 John. It occurs some fifty times in five chapters. So this is something clear, something obvious. And this is something I'd like us to see this morning. Do you have the mark of love in your life? Well, the question here is 'What is love?' What is the meaning of love? 05:05

## 1. The Meaning

This is a question many people throughout history ask. There's the song that goes, 'What is love?', isn't it? And singers sing about love, poets write about love, young men and women struggle to find love, and, at the end of our life we look back and say, 'What is love, still?' So we are all asking this question. 'What is love?' What do you think is love?

Some years ago, there was a lady in our church who asked me to write a birthday greeting card to another sister in our church. And she wanted different members in the church to write this birthday card and the theme she wanted us to write is love. So, she says everybody just write what love means to you. And this will be a blessing to her for her birthday. So, she came to me and she asked me, 'Can you write about love?' I said, 'Sure'. I took the card and I looked at it for a long, long time. I couldn't find a good statement, or definition for love. I really couldn't. I spent a lot, usually I write quite fast but for that one question 'What is love?', I really struggled with it.

And at the end, I scribbled something and it looked like a mess. It looks like some mumbo-jumbo, just highfalutin words added together. But I'm absolutely not proud of it. And now I sort of erased the memory of that word or that statement. I didn't want to think about it because it's so embarrassing. I think when she looked at it, she (Pastor imitated her making a face and thinking) 'What are you writing?'

I wonder if that's going to happen to us today? What is love? If someone is to ask you what love is all about, what would you say? I struggled at the time. Well, I'm thankful for John because he helps us understand love. See, in verse 16, he says :

'By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us.'

Wow! This is a beautiful verse. Most churchgoers are familiar with John 3:16, isn't it - 'For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.' This is probably the most well-known verse in the bible. But, we forget that there is a beautiful 1 John 3:16 that says :

'By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us.'

Based on this verse, I'd like to give you my working definition for love. I believe

'Love is the Power to unconditionally sacrifice for the Good of Others.'

This is what love is : that He (that is Jesus), laid down his life for us and love is a power to unconditionally sacrifice for the good of others. Love is a power. It's not a feeling. There's this song, popular pop song, 'You've got that loving feeling' and we think about love as a kind of emotion, as a kind of feeling, and we can tend towards sentimentalism or emotionalism. I f-e-e-l like I love you, I f-e-e-l in love with you, I f-a-l-l in love with you. These are words that primarily address the emotions but love is not primarily, at least biblical love, is not primarily about the emotions. It involves it, but it's more than that. It's a power. It's a power to choose to do right. It's a power to do what is difficult. It's a power to even overcome your fears, overcome your feelings. You see, Jesus laid down his life for us even though he feared, even though he did not quite feel like it. Remember the Garden of Gethsemane? He agonized. And He says, 'If it is possible, let this cup pass from me.' But the fact is this : love is not about your feelings. Love is a choice, it's a power to overcome your fears, the power to give you courage to do what is good for others. And that's what Jesus did. Love is a power, it's a power to sacrifice. If you do not sacrifice, there is no love. There is no love in our sacrifice and this is true in Jesus' life, isn't it?

There is this young man who bought a present for his girlfriend for the very first time, and, attached to the present is this card that says, 'with all my love and most of my allowance'. Well, he's trying to tell her that love demands a sacrifice. Now Jesus didn't just give us his allowance. Jesus sacrificed himself. He sacrificed all his glory. He sacrificed intimacy with the Eternal Father. He gave it all up and that's why we see love. Love is a power to sacrifice. Now, you say, 'Pastor, what's so great about that sacrifice because my mother sacrifices for me. My father sacrifices for me. And I sacrifice for my children. Well, that's true. There is a kind of love seen in our world today amongst parents and children, and husband and wife. But what marks 'divine love'. What marks this unique love from God is this word 'unconditionally'. God sacrificed His Son for us while we were yet sinners. 10:55

Most of you will be familiar that in the Greek language, there are four different words for love. You have the words 'Storge', 'Philia', 'Eros' and 'Agape'.

Storge : Affection ~ Love between family members.

Philia : Friendship ~ Love between friends.

Eros : Romance ~ Love between a married couple.

Agape : Unconditional Love ~ The Love of God.

They are all love but the difference is this : 'Storge' is the love between family members. It's a family kind of a love. A mother loves the child. True. Why? Because the child is hers. Then you have 'Philia' - a love between friends. And then you have 'Eros' - a love between a married couple. It's a romantic love. But the word that is used in the bible is the word 'Agape' which is an unconditional love. God loves us while we were yet sinners. God loves us while we were filthy and stinky and we were rebellious and we hate God and we want to run from Him. When we were his enemies, He loved us. Jesus Himself said :

'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' Now this is how the Jews have interpreted their Old Testament : I can love my fellow Jews, I can love those who are like me, but those who are Gentiles, those who are not like us, we can have a right to hate them. It's a very conditional love. It's a love based on race. It's a love based on heritage so they have this interpretation : I can love my neighbour and I can hate my enemy. But Jesus says, No, the real love that God is talking about and wants us to have is one that is unconditional - that we love even though they are not like us, and even though they do not like us. 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ....' (Matthew 5:43-45 ESV)

And the logic goes on (in Matthew 5:46-48) : 'If you love those who love you, what reward do you have? What's so special? If you say you follow me, if you say that you are in the kingdom of God, and you just love those who love you, you're no different from those who do not know God because even the collectors do the same. The tax collectors were the despised rascals of the day. They were the traitors of the day. They were the hated people of the day. And Jesus says if you just love those who like you, you are like those scums, that you call. You are like the tax collectors. If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles, the people who do not know God, do the same? So Jesus says if you follow me, you must be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. So Jesus is saying if you say you are my follower then there is a great and high standard of love - not Storge, not Eros, not Philia, but one that is Agape. This is a love, the power to unconditionally sacrifice for the good of others. That's what Jesus did. He gave Himself so that we may get all the good, so that we may be cleansed, we may be forgiven, we may be restored and reconciled with God that we who have believed will be the heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ. So John says this is what will mark you as a Christian. It's not the necklace you wear. It's not the bracelet that you wear. It's 'do you have this power in your life to love those who hate you, to unconditionally sacrifice?'. He says this is the mark. So this is the definition. But to make this even clearer, John gives us the opposite of love so that it's crystal-clear for us. So he says if you really are a Christian you will love and you will not be like this man, Cain. You will not be like Cain. 14:55

'We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother' (1 John 3:12 ESV)

So John takes us to Genesis chapter 4 and he talks about Cain. Cain is the very first person born into this world. Adam was made by God. Eve was made from Adam's ribs and Cain was the very first man born into this world. And, sad to say, the very first man born into this world is a man born in sin, and he is a murderer. He murdered his brother. The word 'murdered' here is a very graphic violent word. It is a word that means 'to slash the throat, to slaughter, to butcher'. That's a violent kind of a death. And so Cain, the very first born, butchered and killed his brother, Abel. That shows that he did not belong to God. That shows he doesn't have the love of God in his heart. That shows that even though Cain was like a worshipper, his heart is far from God. The description of Cain is that he was of the evil one. You see, Cain did not say he's an atheist. He says he wants to worship God. I mean, he brings his offering, but God sees beyond his superficial offering and sees his heart. And he proves it to all of us by saying, 'Look at Cain. He looked like a Christian, he looked like my child, he

looked like a follower of God, but he is not because he murdered his brother. He has no love, no divine love, abiding in him.'

We all, today, can come like Cains, with our worship, but God sees your heart and you can see your heart. You know in Genesis 4, God actually warned Cain. He gave him a check : 'Cain, are you sure you want to do this?' He didn't listen. And maybe this morning, it's a warning, it's a kind of a check for us : 'Are you really a child of God? Then why are you still living in such animosity and hatred and bitterness?' Now some of us will say, 'arh...Pastor, I'm not like Cain because I would never murder anyone. I've never murdered anyone. I will not be like him.'

Interestingly this morning, I was sleeping and I had a dream that I murdered four people. It's just one of the bizarre dreams of my life. I murdered four violently, you know. I was shocked with myself. And in the middle of the dream, I was like trying to, you know, in the middle of a dream you can sort of like drift in and out of consciousness. Are you dreaming or are you not dreaming? Are you sure you murdered four. Is this real? And when I realized it's not real, I really heaved a sigh of relief and continued to sleep. And I dreamed another dream.

I've never murdered anyone, you say. I hope not. I will never murder anyone, you say. I also hope not. But you see, it is not as simple as just physical murder because verse 15 says 'every one who hates his brother is a murderer'. Ah, yes, we probably won't kill anyone here physically because of the death sentence in Singapore but you might want to kill someone in your heart. And maybe you are, this morning, killing someone. In your heart you're already killing him or her. Maybe your boss, your colleague, your mother-in-law, whatever it is. You want to kill him or her. And so the bible says if you hate your brother, you are a murderer.

'Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer' (1 John 3:15 ESV)

And this is a very absolute statement. John is a very absolute guy. There are some people wishy-washy. Not John. He's black and white. He doesn't say 'Ah..., yeah, maybe'. He says 'this is it'.

'...you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.' (1 John 3:15 ESV)

If you are a murderer, you have no Zoe. Now this gets us into trouble now. Because, wow, if I hate anyone after I get saved, it means I never was saved. Is that what you're saying, John? So high a standard? Now that's not really what he said. Remember we have always been saying the book of 1 John is not saying 'one strike and you are out'.

It doesn't mean that one sin and you are no more a Christian. It doesn't mean that one hatred and you are no more a Christian. Remember it's not about sinless perfection but sincere progression. It is seen in the tense that is used. Everyone who IS hating or who continues or persists in hating his brother is a murderer. So John is not saying 'one time angry or one time bitterness means you lose your salvation, or you're not a Christian, but he's saying, if you continue to hate someone after 10 years, after 20 years, after 30 years you are still hating your brother then you know that you have no eternal life abiding in you. 20:18

And so, this morning, is there someone in your mind that you really hate? You wish you could put a face on the board and you throw darts at him or her. But if you have been doing this for a long time you got to watch for your soul because that is the opposite of what love is all about. So we have seen what love means, we have seen what love is not. Can I share with you what are the manifestations then of love. What does love look like in reality? It's all very abstract, you see. Oh, it's a power to unconditionally sacrifice for the good of others. But how does it look in practice?

## 2. The Manifestations

John says,

'By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.' (1 John 3:16 ESV)

Love is about laying down your life. So the heroes here, the men here, will probably say, yes, I'm willing to lay down my life for my family. If there is a World War III, I'll be the first to die. If there is someone drowning, I'll jump in. I'll sacrifice myself to save my children. If there is a car that is coming, I'll jump in front of the car, get banged so that the people behind will be saved. I'm willing to sacrifice myself in a heroic deed. Sure, that is great. Wonderful if you are willing to do that. But John is not really talking about that one heroic act in the future. He brings it down to a very practical simple day-to-day kind of a reality when he says in verse 17:

'But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?'

So John is saying 'yeah, yeah, yeah, you can talk about the future when you're willing to sacrifice during World War III but would you consider giving up the world's goods you have right now to meet the needs of those around you? 'So don't think of those highfalutin dreamy scenarios. Think now in simple ways in meeting the needs of the

poor and those who are placed by God in your life. This is a very common teaching in the bible. When you read the bible, you realize God doesn't quite demand that you now go to the cross and die. Or he doesn't necessarily say to you 'go to Africa and sacrifice yourself as a missionary'. Some people are called to do that, but not all. But all of us are told in the bible to do something like this in our daily living, you may say, mundane living. This is where love is lived out. James says likewise :

'What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.' (James 2:14-17 ESV)

'What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? This man says 'I'm a Christian, I go to church, I believe in God. I have faith, but, you know what, he has no works. Can this kind of faith save him? Think about it, if a brother or sister is poorly clothed, hungry, lacking in daily food and one of you just say to them 'now go in peace. God will be with you. Be warmed and be filled'. And you do nothing else. You don't give him the things needed for the body. What good is that? So this kind of faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. It's like Shawn holding up that seashell ~ looks great on this side, but when you flip it around, it's dead. Nothing is there. And so John says :

'Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.' (1 John 3:18 ESV)

Ah, some of you who are men here are very sharp. You say 'fantastic verse. I'll memorize this verse.' Because when my wife says 'you never say to me 'I love you', you can tell her, 'let us not love in word or talk. Dear, I love you. I have already said that on our wedding day. And if there's any change, I'll update you again. But till then, I don't have to repeat it.' Is that what John is saying? No, no, no. John is not saying 'don't ever say 'I love you'. John is saying when you say 'I love you', let it not be empty talk. Let us not love in word or talk only, but in deed and in truth. It's got to be real. No deeds, no love. No sacrifice, no love. No giving, no love. 24:54

The bible tells us a story of the good Samaritan as you could recall in Luke 10. And basically there's this man who is injured, wounded, robbed. And there is this religious guy called a Levite who walks by. He ignores this wounded man. And then another religious guy called the priest. He walked by and ignored this man. But a



third man is a Samaritan. The Samaritans and the Jews are enemies, but this Samaritan gave up his riches, gave his animal, gave his time, to meet the need of this wounded Jew. And Jesus says 'that is love' because it is in deed and in truth. So the Bible tells us today :

'So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good (not just say things) to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.' (Galatians 6:10 ESV)

Are you willing to surrender the world's goods that God has placed in your hands and sacrifice it for the good of others? I want to boil it down. It's really very simple. The bible says it can be as simple as giving a glass or a cup of cold water. How much does this cost? Singapore, not much. Overseas, maybe more. But it's just a cup of cold water. It's all you need. That's all. That's an expression of love.

I read also recently about a pastor in the US. In The States, they have big sprawling campuses. And they don't have multi-storey carparks and so on. And their carparks are big and huge and their building is right in the middle. And I read about this pastor and his church leaders who determined, even though they are the earliest to church on Sunday mornings because they have to prepare and set up, they will be the ones who will park the furthest. I thought it's very interesting because in Singapore it's like if you're here early, you 'chope' (a colloquial term for 'to reserve') the place, lah. I mean, you are here in Novotel chope the best one - near the escalator, near the lift, no need to walk so much. Nobody thinks of parking the furthest. But this pastor, I mean, okay granted here you have other shoppers and so on, it's not always that necessary. But for them, the leaders wanted to serve the members. He didn't think that 'whoa, I am the pastor, I should have a reserved lot for me'. Yeah, his lot is reserved, but the furthest one.

What about here? Well, when you come to church, I think this is one of the things (picture of a complimentary parking coupon shown on the screen) you want to take, right? I mean, you walk round, the first thing, even if you pass by the table, you will turn around and take from the table because there's this Liang Court Complex single exit ticket. Whoa, this one is very important because it costs me \$3.21, GST included. But, do you know there are people in this church who drive and determined not to take this card? Is it because they are very rich? No, no, no, because they just want to leave it for others. Ok, please, please. I'm not saying all of you should give up this card right now and I'll have a leftover I do not know what to do with it anyway. It's part of our contract with the hotel of course. But I'm saying it can be very little, small things that reflect your heart of love to be willing to give up something for others.

Just that. Not demanding that we do this. I'm just saying these are examples of expressions of love that we could see. It could be someone who is sick and you provided for their needs. It can be a simple visitation, it can be the giving up of your goods. I find the verse fascinating in the bible. It's a very simple verse, but I find it fascinating, if that is true for our lives, is in Ephesians. It says :

'Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.' (Ephesians 4:28 ESV)

Don't you think this is a fascinating verse? It tells me that there are those who are thieves before they came to Jesus Christ. They steal, they rob. They're not working. They are just lazy, boh-chup (meaning 'couldn't care less' in the Hokkien dialect), delinquent youths maybe, or thugs and gangsters. But after they have come to know Christ and they are part of the church in Ephesus, Paul says, 'I know some of you. You are like this and he says because of Jesus, because of how he gave his life for you, because of how you have received Jesus into your life and you have the gospel in your heart. You have new life, you have Zoe. Then let that thief no longer steal. And just like that, he says, let him labour. Don't just steal, don't just stop that, but work. 'But I have never worked in my life. I've always been a loan shark.' But now work. 'I've always bullied people into giving me...' Now work. Do honest work - with your own hands. And this is where we say 'yes, Singapore is like that'. We must work. If we don't work, we don't have welfare. If we don't work, we don't have money. 30:30

But look at what Paul says about why you work. Most of us work 'so that I can be rich'. Most of us work 'so that I can build my empire'. Paul says 'because of the gospel, you work, so that you have something to share with anyone in need'. What a radical change from a thief who takes advantage of people to enrich himself to someone who works hard so that he can give to those who are in need. Why? Because he has Zoe, because he has received the life from God, because he has eternal life abiding in him. How do I know if he is a Christian? Because of his way of living. He is so different. It doesn't matter if he comes in tattered clothes. When he doesn't have a cross on his neck. It doesn't matter if he has a non-Christian name like Ah Beng. I see his life. He doesn't steal anymore. He works hard and he gives to the poor. He's born again.

How do you see your goods today, folks? How do you see the riches God has given to you? How do you see your work? What's your perspective of work? Nothing's wrong with earning money. Actually, some of you may earn lots of money and you don't

have to necessarily be guilty about that. But why you work hard and what do you do with the money, I think, is the question at hand.

I think loving is not just about giving your money and your resources. Loving is also in the things you say, the things you encourage people by, and even the things you say to rebuke others in sin. That's love. It takes love to rebuke people and I've learned it the hard way in my own life. I have not always rebuked. Maybe it's because I really never loved the person enough. The bible does tell us that rebuke is the expression of love done with the right motive and in the right way. Sometimes it's not just what we say that can love others or that can encourage and build up others. It's also what we don't say. We live in a culture where people need to be heard, you realize? Very few people will really sit down and listen to you. Every time you engage in a discussion or conversation, we are always trying to talk and dominate. And we want people to hear us. I realize it takes someone who is willing to give up that right. Someone who loves to really listen. Maybe we should all put a zip around our mouths. (Screen shows the image of a man with a closed zipper across his mouth). And this listening is a loving act, it's a loving thing to do.

And I'm saying to you that we can love each other, one another in very simple ways. It can be a warm handshake to someone who is new here today. You look beside you and there is someone new. You don't want to talk to him and you walk off. On the other hand, you may sacrifice your five minutes. You may sacrifice, in a sense, your face. I know it's very 'lau kwee' (meaning 'embarrassing' in Hokkien), when you talk and you do not know what to say. But you know, love is willing to sacrifice and to reach out the hand to welcome someone who may be a stranger, who may be new here for the first time. It may be driving, fetching someone from here to there. All these are little deeds of love. Maybe praying? And this is biblical because Jesus says 'pray for your enemies'. It's all that we can do. So,

'Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.' (1 John 3:18 ESV)

How's your life? You talk a lot about love but very little deeds of love. Love in deed is Love indeed. Ok, I know, if you are hearing the audio you'll be like 'what are you talking about?' of course. But love in deed is love indeed. Ok, you get the difference? What is real love? It's seen in your deeds. 34:47

'Whoever loves much, does much.' ~ Thomas Kempis

Very simple, very true. Whoever loves much, does much. And the last one :

'You may give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.'

Like I said, Jesus didn't stay in the heavens and say 'I love you, I love you, I love you, O World, I love you'. If he did that, it will be hypocrisy. If he did that, it will be a scam. You say you love us but you did nothing for us. I tell you this is how we know love. He gave his life for us. How do you know you love others? You give your life for others. Not in a heroic sacrifice way, but in the little things you do on a daily basis. This is how you know and this is how you know you have the Zoe living in you. So, we have looked at

1. The Meaning, and we have looked at
2. The Manifestations, and lastly, I just want to remind us that this
3. The Mark of a true Christian.

The Christian is marked out by love. There's this wonderful passage in verses 14, 16 and 17. It looks like a lot to you but it's really very simple :

'We know that we have passed out of death into life, (My question to you is, what kind of life is this?) (Zoe) because we love the brothers.

By this we know love, that he laid out his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives (Psyche) for the brothers.

But if anyone has the world's goods (Bios) and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (1 John 3:14,16,17 ESV)

I want to focus on these words : life, life, goods. Elsewhere, this word is translated 'life' as well, by the way. But no point looking at the English because we must go to the original Greek. So, we know that we have passed out of death into life and the word life there is the word Zoe. We have passed from death unto Zoe. Now, what is Zoe? I've used this word repeatedly this morning. It's based on the sermon I've preached a few months ago. Zoe refers to a particular kind of life. What kind of life? Zoe refers to 'spiritual life'. Excellent. By this we know love - that he laid down his life and we ought to lay down our lives. The word here is the word 'Psyche', from which you get the word psychology. Psyche refers to the mental or psychological or the emotive or the volitional part of the human being. Now, we think, we feel, we sense, and all that is part of that 'Psyche'. Really, the real life in a human, in a man, before he comes to know Christ.

And then the world's goods here is the word 'Bios'. And the word 'Bios' refers to physical life and the things that are necessary for physical sustenance. If you read this in the Greek, it becomes very fascinating because John is saying, the reason why anyone is willing to give up his Bios is because he has first lived out his 'Psyche' himself. Why I can give that money is because I have first given my life. If I'm holding onto my life, I can never give things. So you give things when you give your life. You know you can never really love your wife and lavish her with a lot of things if you have not given yourself to her. A mother is willing to buy a lot of things for the kid because she has given her life to the kid, in a sense. So, I can never give to the poor until I'm willing to lay down my life. And the only reason why you can lay down your life is because you have had this spiritual life from God, this is Zoe.

Many people in church struggle with this. You know, giving, to them, is such a pain. You almost feel like squeezing blood out of stone. They won't give. Why? Because maybe they have not had Zoe yet. That's a reality. Now, I'm not saying this so that, whoa, we increase our giving. That's not my purpose at all. But this is what the Scripture is saying. How we give to the poor is a reflection of whether we have had this experience of Zoe in our lives. If I may put it this way : Zoe leads to Agape. Where there is Zoe, there will be Agape because God is love. Where there is love, you know there is life. Where there is life, you know, there will be love. Straightforward and simple. And so, someone said :

The sign that you followed Abraham was circumcision.

The sign that you followed Moses was keeping the Sabbath.

The sign that you followed John the Baptist was Baptism. (Of course, these are quite loose, in a sense, general.)

But the sign that you follow Jesus is that you love one another.

'And so, John tells us, we know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.' (1 John 3:14 ESV)

If you hate your brother, you are a murderer. And a murderer has no eternal life abiding in him. Straightforward. 40:40

There is this lady who was bitten by a dog. And she rushed to the hospital. And the doctors examined both herself and the dog and concluded to her, 'Sorry ma'am, but the dog has had rabies.' The lady said, 'Can I have a piece of paper and a pen?' She got that piece of paper and pen and started to write down names. The doctor said, 'No, no, no, lady, you misunderstand. It is just rabies. And it is treatable. You don't

have to die. And you don't need to write your will or your last testament.' The lady says, 'Who says I'm writing the last testament? I'm writing down the names of the people I will bite.'

You know, deep in the hearts of people are grudges and bitterness. I mean, I've spoken to many people and I realize one deep problem in many people's life. It's unforgiveness. Really. It shapes and clouds your life and John is saying, if you have this, if you're hating someone, it shows that you may not have eternal life to begin with in the first place. And it's very sad when I see in church sometimes there are conflicts. Now a church is not a perfect place. Church is a gathering of very sinful people. Church is a gathering of imperfect people. And there will be misunderstandings, there will be conflicts, there will be arguments, there will be neglect; and even abuse. There will be. But the bible never tells us that when you hit a difficult relationship that you run away from it. And it's said that when people come to church because things are well, but when they have the least of conflicts, they leave church. Now it's not about leaving Gospel Light, in particular, that's a problem. It's about the bible and the bible never calls us to run away from difficult relationships, you realize that? Never. God wants us to have reconciliation in our relationships and if you're always running away, and when you run away, you continue to bear that grudge in your heart all the rest of your life, there is a real spiritual danger that you might not have had eternal life to begin with in the first place.

'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. (1 John 3:14 ESV)

I didn't say this. John did. So we need to love the brothers. Practical deeds of love. It's a warning against bitterness, at the same time, it's an encouragement, I think, from John to say, 'work out your salvation. Let God's Zoe shine through you by the deeds of love'. Maybe after the sermon today, some of you will say, 'yeah, Pastor, I'm very inspired. I'm going to love the whole world. I'm going to sing with Michael Jackson (the song) 'Heal the World'. I'm going to give my life to the whole world'. Well, you can do that, and great if you do. But I suggest to you, maybe that's not the most practical thing. CS Lewis says,

'It is easier to be enthusiastic about Humanity than it is to love individual men and women, especially those are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved or otherwise unattractive. Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular.'

What I'm saying is, if you really want to put practice to God's Word today, if you are really a believer, then I say to you : think about someone. It may be your boss who just scolded you on Friday. It may be your subordinate who just disrespected you on Thursday. It may be your wife who said something unkind to you on Wednesday. It can be your church brethren who disagreed with you last Sunday or it can be your mother-in-law who nags at you every day. Whoever it is, maybe that's the person God wants you to start with, to work out reconciliation, love, to have simple deeds of love and kindness to him or her, and prayerfully from him or her, it spreads. You see,

'To love the world to me is no chore, my big trouble is the man next door.'

Sometimes it's the hardest to be nice and loving to the person right beside you. Why do we need to love? 'Wow,' you say, 'Pastor, this is such a demanding sermon. I came this morning, I want more love and now you tell me I got to love. I have nothing to give. It's so difficult. Church feels so legalistic like a lot of performance things. A lot of this and that, and things to do.' 45:40

A story is told of a man who is very generous. He owns a restaurant. And whenever there are poor people who come, he will dole out the free food for them. When charitable organizations approach him, he would give. And so one day, a missionary came by and shared his needs. And this Christian man immediately pulled out his drawer and took out money and gave to the missionary. The missionary noticed something special in that drawer. He noticed a nail, a rusty big nail, a 6-inch nail in his drawer and asked him, 'what is this nail for?' This restaurant owner says, 'Well, this is a nail to remind me how my Savior was nailed to the cross for me. Whenever I see that nail, I realize I have this life from God. I want to lay down my life for others. And this, that God has blessed me with, is for others.' This man has said, in essence, I love because he first loved me.

My friends, the Christian message is really not about you doing all these deeds of love so that God will love you. No, I'm not saying that at all. That's not what John is saying. The Christian message is this : know how much God loves you in Jesus Christ and when you really know that, your life will be gladly lived out for others. We love because he first loved us.

This morning, let's focus our attention not so much, well, I may joke about it - about your boss, your mother-in-law. Let's focus on Jesus because that nail that was driven through his wrists was driven for me. He loves you this much (Pastor stretched his arms out wide).

Let's bow for a word of prayer together. I can't see your heart, but you can, and most of all, God can. And he does. There's no point in anyone of us coming like Cain, pretending to worship when our hearts have not been changed. No point coming with sacrifices if we see that there is no eternal life abiding in us because we are still a murderer, if you're still hating and being bitter about someone. John is very black-and-white and I think God is also very, very precise. Don't hide behind your deeds, your rituals, your heritage, your name, but turn that seashell of your life around and see if there is anything moving in you. Are you walking in the light and are you walking in love? Not just talking about love, but the deeds and the actions that back it all up. Are you bitter with someone today? Are you running away from that brother or sister? I ask you today to turn to Jesus Christ. Stop pretending, stop hiding behind some deeds that you do in order to earn a right standing with God. You know God wants to save you today, and, in his kindness, in his mercy He gave us this Word so that we will not sit on false presumptions and assumptions but we can know we can be saved.

So seek the Lord this morning with all your heart. Pray unto him to change your heart. With all that you can, and all that you are, repent of your sin and turn to His finished work on the cross. Is there someone in your heart you can't forgive today? Would you ask God to let His life flow through you. You know you can never really love people with an Agape love. It's not in us. It's in God who is in us. And so I ask you today to look to Jesus and pray that His love would flow through your life. Is there someone God has burdened your heart to serve and to reach and to reconcile with? Start today. Start Monday. Start being a doer of God's Word.

Father, we thank you this morning. We extol the servant hood of Jesus Christ. How we were yet sinners but he came to wash our feet and to give his life. We thank you that we today speak about love, not in a sense that we have to manufacture it and eke that out of us, but we speak about love with confidence and joy because you are love, and, if you are living in us, we can trust you to walk in love. So, dear God, would you work in all our hearts today that Gospel Light Christian Church, though a messy people, though a sinful people, will progressively become a loving people, a people walking out the Agape love of God. Father, we pray for those who have yet to have real Zoe as yet. Work in hearts, touch lives, save them, let Jesus be truly born in them. We are thankful, in advance, for what you will do. I think these are life-changing times. And so we pray that you will so work in each one of us that as we grow in Christ, as we have this life-changing relationship with him, you will be supremely glorified through this church. We thank you, we pray all this now in Jesus' name. Amen.