**Love Like Jesus**

**The Word**

Read together 1 John 3:16-24

**The Big Idea**

John calls us to love like Jesus, sacrificially offering ourselves to one another. As we do this, we reflect the love of Christ to the world, and our own confidence and assurance before God grows.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. On Sunday, we discussed how, when looking for assurance that we truly have eternal life, we can either look to the “roots” or the “fruits.” If someone asked you, “how can I tell if I’m an authentic believer?” how would you answer that question?

2. John’s call to love focusses on our relationships with each other in the body of Christ. How is our love for our “brothers and sisters” in the faith to be different from our love for those outside the faith, if at all?

3. John warns us not to “close the heart” to a fellow believer in need (v. 17). When do you see yourself closing your heart to a needy believer, and what internal conversation do you have with yourself to justify that?

4. Consider the three questions asked at the end of Sunday’s message included in the Conclusion below. What comes up for you?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. John writes to give us confidence and assurance of eternal life (5:13)

B. Two ways to gain confidence

 1. The roots: being grounded in deep gospel truths

 2. The fruits: living practical lives that exhibit the fruit of the Spirit

 3. John’s focus is primarily on the fruits

C. The fruit of love is the distinguishing mark of the Jesus community (Jn 13:34-35 and 17:20-23)

II. The love of Jesus (v. 16)

 A. Jesus’ love was marked by compassion (Mt 9:36) and sacrificial action (Jn 10:11)

B. His love is so different than the trivialized (and sexualized) version of love we often see in our culture today

C. His love was given “for us.” We must experience his love as deeply personal if it is to have a transforming effect on our lives

III. Our call to love like Jesus (v. 16-18)

A. Our love for our “brothers and sisters” (= fellow Christians) is to be the distinguishing mark of our community

B. A practical example: offering resources to someone in material need (v. 17-18)

1. A poignant question

a. If we find ourselves withholding from those in real legitimate need, how can the love of God (which is so selfless and sacrificial) be in us?

b. Consider the gospel in material/financial terms (2 Cor 8:9)

2. A poignant phrase

a. “Shows no pity” in v. 17 literally is “closes the guts/closes the heart”

b. We all know the experience of seeing a real need and having our hearts go out to that need and then quickly closing our hearts to that need because:

 1) the need feels overwhelming

2) we consider the cost to ourselves (time, resource, agenda) and so we pull back

 3) we have a critical attitude towards the needy person

c. “if our hearts condemn us” in v. 20 contextually is most likely referring to the closing off of our hearts to a person in need

d. “A base thought arises in the heart of a Christian which condemns the loving sacrifice as unnecessary and suggests that it can be avoided and that the love can be maintained apart from a definite surrender of life or goods. This impulse, however natural, must be eradicated. The heart must be reasoned with and persuaded in the presence of God to make the sacrifice willingly. The call of God is greater than the base impulse of the human heart. Moreover, his knowledge is infinite, and no motion of the heart escapes his notice.”

IV. The confidence that comes from loving like Jesus

 A. When we begin to love like Jesus, it gives us confidence that our faith is, indeed, real

B. John mentions this confident knowing in several places (3:14, 3:18-29, 3:21-23, 4:16-17)

1. We can regularly close our hearts off to the needs around us, and that will erode our confidence that our faith is real

 2. Or we can love like Jesus, and our confidence will grow that our faith is real

V. Conclusion

A. Where is the opportunity to love like Jesus?

B. What are you being asked to lay down?

C. What are you being asked to give?