

THE BIG IDEA: We will love like Jesus when we've been loved by Jesus.

The Take-Off

This morning we're kicking off a brand new series called "Love Like Jesus" that is going to take us through the book (or really, the letter) of 1 John.

So, right up front let's talk about the purpose of this series. You say, "Well, duh, it's to love like Jesus." Kind of.

Our goal is actually found in the verse that just scrolled on the screen before I got up here, and it's 1 John 4:17

John wrote "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement, because in this world we are like Him (Jesus).

So, yes, we want you to love like Jesus, but that's more a by-product of the goal. The goal is that you will be able to stand one day in front of the God of the universe and have confidence. And John says that the way to be able to stand in another world with confidence is to live in this world like Jesus.

So the love of Jesus is made complete in how we love here so that someday we can stand in confidence without fear. That's not the Big Idea, just some bad poetry!

Sometimes, things just go together, and everybody knows it.

Let's see if it's true. Let's play a little game where I show you a picture and you tell me what goes with what's in the picture.

We'll do an easy one to start with. Peanut Butter and... (jelly)

Ok. So you see how the game works, right? Let's try a few more pictures.

Salt and... (pepper) // Bacon and... (eggs)

Now, this one could be tough, but I have faith in you! Milk and... (cookies)

Ok, let's take the game to another level. No pictures, just the name of a person and you shouting out who they naturally go with.

Bert and (Ernie) / Ken and (Barbie) / Batman and (Robin) / Romeo and (Juliet) / Sonny and (Cher) / Mickey and (Minnie) / Superman and (Lois Lane) / Samson and (Delilah)

Great job. I think what we're seeing this morning is that some things just naturally go together, and John - the author of the book we'll be looking at over the next 4 weeks - agrees.

He says that 2 things go together, and it's being loved by Jesus and loving like Jesus. In fact, that's today's Big Idea:

We will love like Jesus when we've been loved by Jesus.

You can count on it. They go together, and when they don't, that means there's a problem, and that's exactly what John tackled in this letter that we call 1 John.

Let's tackle this morning like this: let's look at the problem and then the solution.

And let's tackle it the way John did: in love as he dealt with people he loved (1 John 2:1 - "dear children")

John wrote the letter to reveal a lie that could tear the church apart and ruin its testimony and to replace it with a truth that could strengthen the church and solidify its testimony.

There was a problem in the church, and we'll start there so we can get some idea of what John was thinking when he wrote this letter. Then we'll close with the solution (because it's always good to end with the good news!).

1. The problem: They weren't loving like Jesus

- a. Before we can get to the problem, we need to deal with the bigger problem.
- b. Here's what I mean: the problem wasn't just that they weren't loving like Jesus, but the bigger problem was that many of them were trying to love like Jesus without Jesus.
- c. Let me try to clear that up: there was an error going around in the church when John wrote this, and looking back we see now that it was the beginning of a lie called "Gnosticism."
- d. Now, that's a big word and they believed a lot of things that we could talk about, but let me sum it up like this:
 - They believed that the spiritual was divine and good while the material was created and evil
 - Because matter was evil, a pure God could not have created it
 - If he could not have created it, then he would never have become part of it
 - Therefore, Jesus could not have been the Son of God
- e. Everybody got it? Yeah, me either.

- f. Here's what it really boils down to: the believers that John wrote this to were in danger of (if not already doing it) trying to love like Jesus without first being loved by Jesus.
 - g. They were risking making love their God.
 - h. And before we throw the book at them, let's admit that we're right there with them. Our culture has taken something beautiful like love and we have made it a god.
 - Nicholas Sparks is a multi-millionaire because of it
 - The porn industry flourishes because of it
 - 50 Shades of Gray sold like crack to believers and non-believers alike because of it
 - People practice relationship killers like pre-marital sex and cohabitation because of it
 - i. What is it? The elevation of love from a gift of God to a god.
 - j. "But we love each other" is all someone has to say in our culture to end the conversation.
 - k. The believers were claiming that they knew Jesus but weren't living like they knew Jesus
 - l. They were saying one thing, but doing something else.
 - m. John said Bacon, and they didn't say eggs. There was a disconnect.
 - n. 1 John 1:6; 1 John 1:8; 1 John 2:3-6; 1 John 2:9; 1 John 3:10; 1 John 3:14
 - o. Imagine hearing these words for the first time? What would you be thinking?
 - p. "I'd better be a better person." "I'd better love more." "I need to open the door for strangers more."
 - q. If you read 1 John this week, you already know that the word love is in there a lot. In fact, it's 35 times in the NIV. Love is important.
 - r. But even more important is how we are to love and how we receive the capacity to love, and that is what leads us to the solution.
2. The solution: They needed to be loved by Jesus
- a. Let's take the time to read one more important section.
 - b. 1 John 4:16-17 and 19
 - c. See, everyone wants to love more and even love like Jesus loved, but no one wants to admit that they need Jesus to save them and redeem them from their sinful heart that can't love like Jesus
 - d. Let's just admit it: the best we can do at loving without the love of Jesus in our hearts is this couple (Jack and Rose from Titanic)
 - e. We applaud it and we feel the love and yet without Jesus he just kept sinking, right? Into eternity apart from Jesus, if he was a real person, right?
 - f. There is a crisis in our faith right now, and it's not much different than the dangers of Gnosticism that John wrote about: we live as if love is all that matters, and if it is, then how we live doesn't matter as long as we have love, and that means that we don't need Jesus.
 - g. And that's why John points to Jesus. 1 John 4:19 says that only when we've been loved by Jesus will we have the capacity to love like Jesus.
 - h. They simply go together, like milk and cookies. **We will love like Jesus when we've been loved by Jesus.**
 - i. It all starts with Jesus. With experiencing the love and grace and salvation of Jesus.
 - j. 1 John 1:1 - what we've heard, seen, looked at, touched
 - k. If we've experienced Jesus, we will love like Jesus, and so we need to quickly answer the question: "How does Jesus love?"
 - l. Here are 4 ways:
 - Jesus loved **FIRST** - 1 John 4:19 - We will, too. We will make the first move, take the initiative, be intentional, take the risk, like I did when I wrote Wendy our first song.
 - Jesus loved **SACRIFICIALLY** - Romans 5:8 - He gave of Himself to the point of death. It hurt. So will we.
 - Jesus loved **HONESTLY** - John 8:11 - Jesus had a gift for telling people the truth about themselves in light of the truth about Himself in such a way that they wanted to better themselves. We will, too. Loving like Jesus includes speaking the truth, but when we've been loved by Jesus like this woman was, we'll love others with the truth in grace, as well.
 - Jesus loved **UNCONDITIONALLY** - Luke 13:34 - He loved even when He wasn't loved in return. It doesn't sell a lot of Hallmark cards, but it sure can change a lot of hearts. Jesus did, and so will we.
 - m. And so this is how Jesus loves, and John says to the church that if we've been loved by Jesus like this, then we will find ourselves loving others like this.

- n. And so I have to ask you, and you have to ask me, how are we doing?
- o. Are we loving like Jesus? And if we aren't, why aren't we?
- p. Really, only 1 reason: we haven't been loved by Jesus.
- q. Remember the bacon (and eggs) and the milk (and cookies). Some things just go to

The Landing

And so we have to ask, how are we doing? Are we loving like Jesus? And if we aren't, why aren't we?

Really, there's only 1 reason: we haven't been loved by Jesus.

Remember the bacon (and eggs) and the milk (and cookies). Some things just go together, and John offers us hope here. He says in 1 John 1:7 that if we walk in the light, we WILL HAVE fellowship with each other and with God through Jesus.

1 + 1 = 2. But what if 1 + 1 equals a different answer. The key is to not cheat on the math problem, or try to change the answer because we did the best we could.

"But I really try to love" or "I'm trying to be a better person" isn't the answer to 1 + 1 = 4. The answer is to admit that we're bad at math and need a teacher, or in this case, a Savior.

And if we fall short, the next step is to confess our sins to a FAITHFUL and FORGIVING and CLEANSING God (1 John 1:9).

In the weeks ahead, we need to remember that about God, because John pulls no punches, and we will find ourselves often saying to God, "Forgive me. My life doesn't go together with your love like it naturally should as I follow you." But the hope is that our lives will match. The love we've been given will become the love that we give. Some things just go together, and being loved by Jesus and loving like Jesus are 2 of them.

We will love like Jesus when we have been loved by Jesus.