

“A World of Love and Hate”
 1 John 2:1-2, 9-11, 15-17
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Love does not always lead to what’s best for us.

At least not love the way we humans do it.

Instead, love can often leads to all kinds of complicated situations.

For example:

Romeo loved Juliet

Queen Elizabeth loved Philip and more recently there’s Meghan and Harry.

The English patient Lazlo loved the nurse Hana.

And the moth - - loved the flame.

All of these are examples of someone - - loving someone or something - - who - -

- - someone else - - thought they shouldn’t have loved.

Have you ever loved something or someone - - you shouldn’t have loved?

I think most people at least know about the experience I’m referring to.

Maybe we have - - either hurt or been hurt by - - love.

Or maybe someone we care about - - has loved someone WE thought

they shouldn’t have loved.

This morning’s scripture reading begins with a caution against loving the things of the world. / And according to this New Testament letter - - there is a kind of loving - - that can lead to problems. / First John describes it by saying: “Do not love - - the things of this world”.

According to 1 John - - the REASON not to love the things of the world is that - - if you do you will be - - what he describes as - - walking in darkness.

A person who is walking in this darkness - - described by 1 John - - stumbles - - and does not know which way they are going - - according to the letter of 1 John. / And the things of the world are all about - - lust - - and pride - - and hate.

1 John says that if you hate anyone - - you are not walking in the light.

Basically - - if you hate someone - - then you do NOT love God.

If you love the things of the world - - then you don't love God.

That's what 1 John says.

So DO you - - ever?

Love - - in the wrong way?

Apparently - - humans - - sometimes get love - - terribly wrong.

You don't have to look to far in the news to find examples.

Politicians - - of both parties - - do things that are a lot more about lust than love.

Surely I don't need to go into the details of the most recent case involving a Republican lawmaker... because... we already KNOW the details - - right?!

WE LOVE reading about it - - especially when we didn't have anything to DO with it!

Which - - is in fact - - part of the problem.

Love and the things of this world - - are a problem for John in the Bible.

They are a problem for this letter of 1 John because...

John has ANOTHER vision for what love really is!

The first love - - the real love - - the love of God for us.

First John is ALL about love - - verse after verse.

Just not that broken - - human - - kind of love.

But - - according to 1 John - - we sometimes love things we should not love.

And we sometimes love - - in ways that are not really - - loving.

And sometimes we love things - - that we should not love.

We lust instead of love - - and we love pride and luxury and what are described as “the things of the world”. / But interestingly - - unlike Paul - - John does not have a detailed list of all the specific examples of sins for us to consider. / In some ways it is like John thinks we know enough about what he’s talking about - - not to have to go into too much detail. / At least onto as much detail as Paul - - who lists specific sin after sin.

Loving the things of this world.

We know what that’s about - - right?

Come on - - be honest.

Does any of this ring any bells?

Have you ever - - loved in ways you should have not?

Or known someone who did - - who you loved anyway?

That’s what John is talking about.

Romeo and Juliet love one another - - but it ends in death - - forbidden by their families.

The moth loves the flame - - of the candle - - and we all know how that ends - - over and over again - - with the sizzle of wings and a wisp of smoke.

Worst of all though - - according to 1 John - - is that one of the things we sometimes love - - is hate. / If we all know what it is to love things we should not - - what about hate? / DO we sometimes also - - hate things we should not?

“Hate crimes” have been in the news lately.

Because - - hate has been seen a lot lately.

There has been a lot of talk about hate - - and hate crimes - - and how to respond.

Basically hate crimes are - - about when someone hates - - what we should not hate.

We hate for all sorts of reasons.

And here in this Biblical treatise about love - - are some profound words about hate.

Maybe a treatise on love would be incomplete without referring to the opposite?

Love and hate - - and the things of this world.

It makes me uncomfortable to talk about hate.

I don't like it.

I almost hate to talk about it!

But the Bible does not shy away from it.

1 John says that if you hate another human being you are walking in the darkness.

And God - - is the opposite.

God is light.

So if you hate - - it is the opposite of God.

It is contrary to the very nature of who God is.

In fact in this same chapter those who do not walk in God's light are described as:

The "antichrist".

So it would not be much of a stretch to say that Biblically speaking - - if you hate a brother - - you either are the antichrist - - or are in league with the antichrist. / That's what it says in the letter of 1 John. / The letter about love.

One of the key Biblical texts about love - - does not pull any punches - - when it comes to talking about hate.

So now what?

What do we do in response?

How can we love well - - and walk in the light?

Is it just that we have to - - do our best to try??

Well - - maybe that WOULD help!

But we all know that hatred is insidious - - and a part of our experience.

Other parts of the Bible encourage hate - - hate for sin anyway.

Both the New and Old Testament urge people to hate evil and sin.

So hate is a part of our experience.

And if we are honest - - so is sin.

Thankfully - - 1 John has a way to respond to this broken - - hateful human behavior.

According to the letter - - Jesus is our advocate with God.

And our sins - - which are bound up with the sins of the world - - are not fatal.

There is a way out of the darkness - - and into the light!

The way is to immerse yourself in the love-light of Jesus - - like a little child.

The way is to walk - - in the light - - of the love of God in Jesus.

Maybe the fact that we have loved things we shouldn't have is just a starting point.

Instead of a fatal flaw in human behavior.

Love is a powerful thing.

Either when we love well - - or when we love poorly.

1 John reminds us - - that essentially - - that amazing power - - is Godly.

God IS love - - according to 1 John.

And when we love - - we are in communion with God.

No matter HOW we love - - well or not so well - - on some level it's a God thing.

And the FIRST love - - the love that started it all - - was God's love for us.

God loved us into being.

You and me are loved by God.

That is the first love - - and the foundation of love.

If we can love God in return - - it will lead to loving one another.

According to 1 John - - love for God is perfected in us just like children who learn.

The first time a child does something - - it doesn't always go perfectly.

But in time - - we learn.

Love - - is the same way.

Just be sure - - you are learning from the master and the source.

Don't learn bad love from a bad lover!

Instead - - learn Godly love from the source of all love.

According to 1 John - - if we keep walking in the love light of God - - eventually we will not stumble - - or even be tempted to love in the wrong way.

True love - - the love of God is so much better.

According to this letter - - love for others is so much better than hate.

If we just try it - - we might never go back.

May it be so - - for you and for me.

Amen