

Theme: LOVE=LIFE

- I. Love saves
- II. Love springs
- III. Love sacrifices

“This is how we have come to know love: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.”

“Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. ¹⁶ This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has this world’s goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God’s love reside in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.” (CSB)

God’s beloved children,

Tucked safely in bed, he held his prized possession: a teddy bear. More than that, the blankets snuggling him made him feel secure. Mom held him safe from any monsters in the closet. So secure, he fell asleep in seconds.

What gives you a sense of security? Maybe you’ve grown past the age of needing a nightlight or a special blanky, but we all have things that help us sleep at night. Gods Word today gives us layers of comfort. LOVE=LIFE. It also tells us what we do with God’s comfort. LOVE=LIFE.

God lays out a couple fascinating contrasts in his Word. The first is between the world and believers, but even the name he uses for believers—brothers and sisters—suggests the second contrast: love and hate. Believe love; the world hates. **“Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.”** Hate is the natural state of the world, so it comes as no shock to hear the world hates you.

But wait—hate? That’s an awfully strong word. I could understand if you meant that my political opponents hate me, but the world is a big place. Maybe you

don't feel anyone hates you. You have no enemies, live at peace with everyone. Praise God! But this "if" doesn't mean the world might hate you or might not. No, the world hates God, hates Jesus, and hates you as his representatives. It hates you because you think you have privileged status with God. It hates you because you make them look bad. It hates because it can't do anything else. The masses mimic their master, the devil. He hates heaven itself. He has aimed his hate at the world, an easy target for the master hunter. Similar to how a simple virus can corrupt your computer, rendering it a wreck, Satan's rage has ruined the world. Only this virus is so widespread, it has corrupted all mankind.

No one likes a Goody two-shoes. None of her classmates liked her, either. She always showed up early for class. Always sat in the front. Raised her hand for every question. Reported on her friends who budged out of line or said a bad word. Earned herself no friends. Made them all look bad; they talked about her behind their back. One day, the class bully met her on the way to class and taught her a lesson she would never forget.

So is that it? Do your best, and recognize you'll endear yourself to no one? Should we give up doing good because the world will hate us for it? Make no mistake; God calls us to love. LOVE=LIFE. That also means hate=death. **"The one who does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him."**

With these words God himself cuts us to the heart. You thought you weren't as bad as the prisoners on death row who earned their sentences? God calls everyone who fosters hatred in their hearts "murderers." The law only punishes murderous actions or speech—hate crimes, assault, battery. But God condemns everyone who even wishes evil against a brother or sister. Why? When you hate someone, what are you actually saying? Is it not that you think planet earth would be better off without that person—the seed of murder. At the very least, it means to wish harm or evil against them.

"I hate you!" exclaimed the child to his mother. Dad, who was listening in, scolded his boy. "You can't say that to your mother, son; tell her you're sorry." Like that boy, when we hate one another, we tell God we hate him. We made ourselves murderers of God and lost eternal life. Hatred=death.

Still, LOVE=LIFE. Since the devil corrupted the world with his virus of violence, God sought to restore the system to its former settings. So he sent his Son Jesus into the world, to love and give us life. **"This is how we have come to know**

love: He laid down his life for us.” Since LOVE=LIFE, Love embodied, Jesus Christ, saved us. He died to deliver us from death, loves and lives to bring us to life. This is the first and greatest comfort. Like a loving parent who tucks the kids in until they fall asleep, God’s love remains with us in Jesus, who died for us. God himself forgave our sins because of Jesus. God brought us into love. Only God’s love saves. LOVE=LIFE, eternal life.

Jesus is the greatest comfort. But God also gives us more comforts. He speaks to brothers and sisters, those who have been made alive by Jesus. **“We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters.”** God’s love, given to us in Jesus, lives among you. This shows you belong to God. The world acts like the devil, its owner, but you follow in line with your Lord and Master, Jesus. When we love, we show we live with God. Not the same comfort of mom or dad, but an additional comfort, like a nightlight.

Secondary. Maybe it doesn’t seem very comforting to you today. Not after the words you had with *that* person the other day. You still feel trapped by death because you know how bad you hurt them. Or you look into your heart and see how much you hate anyone who thinks differently from you. How is this supposed to comfort me?

Jesus’ love is primary. Jesus love saves. His love also is the fountain from which our love for others springs. His love must come to you first, because that’s how we know love. So you know for certain. You belong to life itself. LOVE=LIFE. And you strive to kill that hateful heart and replace it with living Love, Jesus. Your love does comfort, as long as it’s second to Jesus’ love for you.

LOVE has become your LIFE. LOVE brought you to LIFE. Live according to that life. God gives us the example of those in need. God in love gave up everything to bring you life. Just as Jesus **“laid down his life for us,”** we give up our lives, what is valuable to us. So when you see a fellow believer—a brother or sister in Christ—in need, what does love do? If one of our own church members were in danger of starving or freezing, what wouldn’t you give up? If you shut your heart and say someone else can help them, instead of showing this self-sacrificing love, you have instead shown you still belong in death. Love sacrifices.

God teaches us here that our hands and our hearts are closely related. What you’re willing to do with your heart, you’re willing to do with your hands. Love, like so many things, is easier said than done. So put your money where your mouth is. Sacrifice. Lay down your life if you have to. Give up the things most valuable to

you. Maybe you're already giving much! God be praised. Maybe you haven't given offerings in months or years. There he is, talking about money again! But how can you claim to love God more than your money and not trust God with your money? God gave it to you in the first place. He doesn't need it. But you know who does? Your brother or sister who is in need. People in Tennessee who have never heard the name of Jesus for anything other than a curse. People in Vietnam who live in constant fear of the devil's attacks. Since Jesus loves you, what are you able to give back to the God who gives you everything?

Then there's the third comfort. You don't have to do this alone. You are not an island of love surrounded by the sea of this world that hates you. The world does hate you. It hated Jesus first. But you have one another. The family of believers, our congregation, people near and dear to our hearts. They love you. You love them. Love one another. You don't just love them with words. You love them in actions and truth. LOVE=LIFE. Love is your life as God's child. It is the life God saved you for when he loved you by dying to bring you eternal life. Sure, your love for your family of believers may look different during quarantine. Could you sacrifice two minutes this week to check up on someone at our church, just to make sure they know Jesus loves them? Could you spend another five minutes and reach out to someone who doesn't know Jesus, to comfort them in uncertain times?

Jesus' love saves. Jesus' love springs into us, fills us with love. Jesus' love sacrificed all for us. Love like that. LOVE=LIFE. God comforts us, his children, with his love. Children grow up; one day they may have their own kids to comfort. Like children, imitate our God. Love one another. His love gives eternal life. Your life is to love one another. LOVE=LIFE.

“Jesus laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.” Amen.