

Conquering Love – 1 John 4:7-16

The Treasure that is Your Life in Christ #14

Introduction – Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week, leading up to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Maundy Thursday is an ancient service commemorating the “*new commandment*” that Jesus gave His disciples (John 13:34-35). This love that we are to bestow upon one another is a work of self-sacrifice from the heart. It comes from first being conquered by that Love and then imitating it, empowered by that Love now emanating from us. Only those who know Christ can bestow this love and all who know Christ will, for love has conquered them.

Love is of God (vv7-13) – Because we are “*the beloved*” we are to love one another. “*The beloved*” are those who have been conquered by love, and they become like the One who has conquered them (vv7-8). While no man has ever seen God, He and His love are manifest to us in the sending of His Son to be a propitiation for our sins (vv9-10), and it necessarily follows that we would love one another (v11). Again, no man has ever seen God, yet we know He is abiding in us when we are transformed to love one another, which only occurs because His Spirit has been given to us (vv12-13).

Doctrinal Love – We must believe in the Son of God and we must love one another (3:23) and while these are distinct aspects of keeping His commandment, they cannot be separated. The kind of love John is writing about always manifests itself in self-sacrificing action for the sake of the beloved (v9). We want to define love as an emotional state, a certain syrupy feeling which does not necessarily require any action. But this is not the love of John 3:16: God so loved that He gave.

Manifest Love – Though love comes from within, God’s love must have an outworking. We see God’s love by seeing Jesus being sent by the Father, being given as a propitiation for our sins. It’s not love if it’s not true, and it’s not true if it’s not love.

Trinitarian Love – If “*God is love*” and this love requires manifest action, then how could God have been God before He created anything? The answer is in the Trinity. The Father and the Son, from all eternity, have a relationship of love. The Holy Spirit is the personal love proceeding from the Father to the Son and from the Son back again to the Father. So, when God the Father communicates His love to the Son at His baptism, He rends the heavens, declares His love, and pours out the Spirit, the gift of His love (Luke 3:21-22). Paul tells us that God does the same for us, “*...hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (Rom 5:5). If this Personal Love, the Holy Spirit, abides in us, then His perfection is manifest not in our hearts alone, but in our own self-sacrificial love for the benefit of the beloved around us – our brothers and sisters in this Trinitarian love. Love has conquered you. Love has transformed you. Love makes you into the Image of the Lover and the One who is Loved.

Testifying Love (vv14-16) - This powerful love, the work of God’s Spirit, and His Word given to us through His apostles, all testify to this: the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. How does love testify? Let’s go back to the New Commandment (John 13:23-24), especially: “*By this all the world will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*”

Savior of the World - Jesus Christ was not sent to be the potential Savior of the world; God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will not fail in their united will. Neither is “*world*” to be reinterpreted to be a smattering here and there of all the nations; God sent His Son to save the world, not to condemn it (John 3:17). Our duty is not to make this happen, but through our love for one another, to testify that God is doing just that (Psalm 110:1-2). We do not love the world by downplaying the truth. And we are not testifying to the truth if we do not love one another.

Let Love Be Without Hypocrisy (Rom 12:9-18) – Just as the love of God gives, so our love, if it is to be full of sincerity, works itself out in countless other “*one anothers.*” These are the manifestations of God’s love having conquered you, your old man and your old ways. These testify not to your goodness, but to the Treasure that God has given to you. This is because your life in Christ is not simply an individual experience. It is manifested, cultivated, and matures as you give that life away, just as Jesus did. He did this as He washed the disciples’ feet and spoke to them of this New Commandment. How do you improve the Treasure that is Your Life in Christ? You let that treasure box open up and give it away in ways these verses describe.

Conquering the World by Loving One Another – “*By this all the world will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” This means more than simply they will notice a correspondence to the love that we manifest to one another with the love that Jesus had for us. Something else is happening. They will know that we are His disciples because they will be conquered themselves through the Spirit-wrought testimony in word and deed that is the love of Christ spreading to the world through our community. When you love a brother or sister, when there is this love between a husband and a wife, when there is this love in a family, and when there is this love in the Christian community, the world will see, know, and come.