

From Death Unto Life I John 3:13-16

Introduction

Last year – the people of Las Vegas were shocked by the criminal behavior of two teenagers who were arrested for driving around in a stolen vehicle and running bicyclists off the road.

The passenger in the vehicle made a video – while they rammed a 64-year-old retired police chief [Andreas Probst] on his bike - - Probst was thrown onto their windshield and rolled off the moving vehicle - - - he was killed in the incident. The video records the boys laughing at the event. [just out for a joy ride]

The teens were later charged with several felonies and connected to several hit and run incidents that morning.

One of the boys – after being arrested told the police he doubted he would get more than 30 days for the offense. In one court appearance – the boys were seen giggling and laughing with each other - - - and making obscene gestures to the family of the officer

Their trial date is set for September 2024

Such callous disregard for human life is shocking - - - and often hard to fathom - - - but strangely not uncommon in our world

The Apostle John has brought up the topic of love and hatred in human behavior

To illustrate the dynamic of human hatred - - - he pointed to the account of Cain's murder of his brother Abel

I John 3:11, 12 - 'For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous.'

The dynamic of human hatred is often studied by psychologists and sociologists - - - because of its adverse effects upon society - - - and linkage often to either criminal behavior in society – or its role in international conflicts – such as between the Palestinians and Jews

Some suggest that hatred finds its origin in a past hurt – or abuse of some kind. The old adage: 'hurting people hurt others' - - - Others see hatred being rooted in insecurity or fear

When the Auca Indians killed the 5 missionaries that had come to approach them with gifts [or Shell oil representatives 10 years earlier] - - - some among them believed that the strange people were there to harm them in some way - - - and so the best response was to kill them first

In fact - - - The Auca had been caught up in a cycle of revenge killing for more than 40 years – with more than 60% of all deaths being by murder within their own people group. [i.e. more people died by murder than by all natural causes combined – such as heart disease / cancer]

They even felt that violence was beginning to threaten their existence and had tried many ways to stop – whether by inter-marriage / - - - but nothing worked

They could not change their own nature

Lee Strobel [who was once an atheist] shared that in his BC days he was a man filled with anger and hatred:

He didn't necessarily know why - - - he just was

Lee Strobel: 'How can I tell you the difference God has made in my life? My daughter Allison was 5 years old when I became a follower of Jesus, and all she had known in those 5 years was a dad who was profane and angry. I remember I came home one night and kicked a hole in the living-room wall just out of anger with life. I am ashamed to think of the times Allison hid in her room to get away from me.'

'Five months after I gave my life to Jesus Christ, that little girl went to my wife and said, "Mommy, I want God to do for me what he's done for Daddy." At age 5! What was she saying? She'd never studied the archaeological evidence [regarding the truth of the Bible]. All she knew was her dad used to be this way: hard to live with. But more and more her dad is becoming different.'

There was a movie made about his life – called – 'The Case for Christ' – 2017 - - - I hadn't seen it – but I asked someone who had – what they thought of it.

They said they didn't really like because the guy was such a jerk!

But – that, of course, was the point - - - He was a jerk before Christ - - - Perhaps the movie may have focused too much on the BC character and not enough on the after character!

Titus 3:3-5 - 'For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.'

Here John points us to this great transformation that Christ brings to a soul

Where there is spiritual life – we find love
Where there is spiritual death – we find hatred

A Christian is one who has passed out of the realm of death unto life - - - and therefore out of the realm of hatred unto love

I. The Darkness of the World - vv. 13-15

Here John points to the world - - - as it stands apart from Christ

The natural man – the one who has not been born again – is going to be characterized by certain traits – things like hatred / malice / profaneness / immoral / etc.

There is a kind of dualism to human behavior - - - [opposites of behavior] there is good and evil / hatred and love / greed and generosity / pride and humility / anger and self-control / immoral and moral / deceitful and truthful / gratitude vs. ingratitude

The old nature which we have by virtue of being born into this world – is beset with all these sinful traits – that belie their origin in Satan

I John 5:19 - 'We know that we are of God and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.'

This is where the sociologists and psychologists are missing a key piece to the puzzle of hatred

There is a supernatural entity - - - that promotes evil / hatred

Satan finds the sinful heart of man to be more than cooperative with his agenda

John points to Christian persecution – or opposition from the world directed towards the Christian

In 1999 – a mob of Hindu fanatics attacked Graham Staines – an Australian missionary who was working among leprosy patients in India. They trapped Graham and his two sons – aged eight and ten inside their station wagon - - - while they doused the car with gasoline and set it ablaze - - - killing all three

Graham's wife – did not flee the country – but stayed – and oversaw the building of a new leprosy center – named the Graham Staines memorial hospital

On and on the list goes

John says here is the source of hatred: spiritual death

Man as he stands outside of Christ is spiritually dead

I remember seeing an old movie as a kid - - - called, 'The night of the living dead'
In the movie you had these dead people – zombie like creatures – partly decomposed -
coming after you to terrorize you

Zombie's are quite popular in today's culture! [go to Zombie burger]

The bible does teach that there are living dead walking around in our world
Not – physically dead – not zombies
But – people spiritually dead

And one of the primary traits is that of hatred towards others
It is a grotesque trait when seen in its full color

The spiritual reality is that man has a sinful heart – ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve into
sin

**Matthew 15:19 - 'Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,
fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.'**

We live in a fallen world – filled with sinners - - - because of that we see things like murder /
hatred / violent crimes / war / etc.

Human history is filled with the scenes of man killing man

Steven Pinker is a professor of psychology at Harvard - - - has written a number of
bestsellers - - - people seem to listen to him

One of his books – 'Enlightenment Now' - - - renders praise to modern society for all its
progress against things that have threatened man in the past

One of his chapters is on global peace

He makes the case that man is progressing – becoming better suited to living with one
another in peace with his fellow man

**Steven Pinker: 'At the dawn of the modern era the great powers were pretty
much always at war. But nowadays they are never at war.'**

He says the last time was the United States against China in Korea – 1950s

i.e. the world is becoming more friendly on an international scale – WW III has not arrived

He argues that as democracy has flourished - - - democratic nations don't tend to go to war
over little peccadilloes – like kings and tyrants used to - - - because the people have a say and
don't care to send their sons and daughters into needless war

One glaring omission from his chapter – he fails to mention MAD – ‘mutually assured destruction’

The reason the global powers have held back from open conflict with other nuclear powers is the prospect of mutually assured destruction - - - not so much democracy

It’s not because man is learning to love his fellow man better than say in the days of Cain and Abel – or that his heart has changed

The only thing that has changed is the power of our weaponry

The Palestinian attack on Israeli civilians - - - October 7th was a stark reminder of the kind of hatred that can be summoned forth from the human heart – carrying out atrocities against women and children / the elderly - - - of a shocking nature

What can change the heart of man?

God says – come to Jesus and I will give you a new heart

Jew / Palestinian / Gentile / Russian / Chinese - - - all need a new heart

The Christian lives in a different realm – He does not hate his brother or his neighbor

He walks in love – as an imitator of God

Howard Marshall: 'If I hate somebody, I am no different in my attitude towards him than a murderer.'

That is the connection – or why John brings up the character of Cain – the murderer

To walk in hatred – even if we don’t carry out the act of murder - - - it’s still the same essential sin – just not taken as far

Our Christian faith is manifest – says John - - - in the fact that we love the brethren

A few years back – 5 young Muslim men infiltrated a Bible study in Turkey – pretending interest in Christianity. In a planned attack they turned on the Christian workers, killing 3 of them. One of the victims - a German missionary had 150 stab wounds in his body. His widow responded with grace to the media – she quoted the words of Jesus

She said: ‘Father – forgive them for they know not what they do.’ Her words made front page news in Turkey – a predominantly Muslim nation.

Even the living dead must sit up and take notice: ‘what kind of love is this?’

God reaches out in love everyday - - - to people who despise Him / reject Him / slander Him
- - - some even say He doesn't exist

His love – keeps reaching out - - - because He is love

To walk in love – is to be in the realm of life
To walk in hatred is to be in the state of death

Pseudo Lewis: 'Love is never wasted, for its value does not rest upon reciprocity.'

When we walk in love – we show that we have moved from death unto life

II. The Example of Love - v. 16

If Cain was the example of hatred - - - John tells that Jesus is the example of love

Jesus' path to the cross was a path of self-sacrifice and love

Love seeks that which is good for another

The state of spiritual death is primarily self-oriented

The old nature is primarily selfish – not sacrificial

John MacArthur: 'Love is the willing, joyful desire to put the welfare of others above our own. It leaves no place for pride, vanity, arrogance, self-seeking, or self-glory. It is an act of choice we are commanded to exercise even on behalf of our enemies.'

Love seeks the good of others

Love protects

Love serves

Love shares

Love is giving / sacrificial

There is no greater evidence of love than to die for another

John 15:13 - 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' [kjv]

We see sacrificial love in the story of **Ruth**

Naomi's husband dies and her two grown sons – who had married Moabite wives also died

Ruth the Moabite [daughter-in-law of Naomi] chooses to stay with Naomi – even though it means her prospects for remarriage and a future become next to nothing / she is signing up for a life of poverty and ongoing widowhood

Naomi points this out to her – she says, - ‘I have no more sons – even if I could remarry and have another child – it’d be too late for you’ - - - go back to your family in Moab

Ruth – in her great faith and devotion both to Naomi and the God of Israel says – ‘no – let me stay with you – your people be my people / your God be my God /etc.]

In so doing – Ruth was making a choice that looked like she was sacrificing her whole future for nothing – but would benefit only Naomi – the older widow

Ruth became the provider – gleaning in the fields – bringing something home to her mother-in-law - Naomi

He gave this assessment of her choice

Ruth 2:11 - 'And Boaz answered and said to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.'

Ruth 3:11 - '. . . All my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.'

Boaz noted her character – her sacrifice / her faith [she ended up marrying Boaz – becoming an ancestor of King David]

Agape love is sacrificial

You make sacrifices for your spouse / kids / someone at church / a neighbor / etc.

That’s what love does

We don’t find ourselves in a position where we need to die for another very often – but we certainly can sacrifice our own interests on behalf of others

You might sacrifice some of your time – to help out another

You might sacrifice some money to help another in need

You might use your talents to serve others / etc.

Mark 10:45 - 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'

Speedy Morris was a highly successful basketball coach at La Salle University in Philadelphia – having coached for a time – both the men’s and the women’s teams

His coaching career actually began with an act of sacrifice

When he was in High School, playing on the varsity basketball team. The elementary school basketball team had no coach – and the school administrator asked Speedy if he would fill in as coach. Speedy was reluctant because it would mean quitting the varsity team – and he loved to play basketball

So – he asked his coach for advice. The coach said – ‘I know you love to play the game - but if you would be willing to set aside your desire to play, you’d be doing a wonderful thing in the lives of those young boys. It would be a real act of service.’

Speedy decided to coach the elementary school team – He continued coaching for another 50 years he enjoyed it so much

It all began with a decision to serve others / a sacrifice He made – he never regretted it.

*** The most meaningful choices you and I make in life – are when we choose to set aside our own comfort and selfish interests – and instead choose to serve others in the name of Jesus

Conclusion

In January 2001, Seiko Sakamoto, a Japanese plasterer in a Tokyo subway station, fell into the path of an oncoming train. Lee Su Hyun, a Korean student in Japan, leaped down on the tracks to save Sakamoto. However - both Hyun and Sakamoto were killed.

This selfless act by the Korean student on behalf of the Japanese laborer has caused many people in Japan to reconsider their long-held prejudices against Koreans. Strong feelings of distrust between the two countries go back to World War II atrocities that the Japanese inflicted on Koreans. Many Japanese people, including the prime minister of Japan, have openly expressed sorrow over their stereotypes of Koreans and have begun to talk about reconciliation.

Nobuaki Fujioka, sixty-two, of Japan, says, “I felt a kind of shame. A young foreigner sacrificed his life for a Japanese. This is not an easy thing to do.”

They were moved by the fact that one of their enemies would die for one of their own people

As we consider the death of Christ on our behalf – we should be moved – that Jesus would die for sinners who are steeped in rebellion against God

Romans 5:8 - 'But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

When Jesus was spit upon and nailed to a cross - - - His first saying from the cross was a prayer – a prayer born of love

Luke 23:34 - 'But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

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