

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 13.10.24

PREACHER: PS ANDY MACCALLUM

CAIN OR CHRIST

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

BEING, THINKING & DOING

Conviction of a Disciple: As we follow Jesus, we become more satisfied by God's love which spills out into all of our relationships

OVERVIEW

Love is the guiding principle of the Christian life, shaping how we live and serve, and true faith requires a sacrificial heart that reflects Jesus' example.

ACTION

Step 1: Reflect: Think about a time when you offered God or someone else "some" rather than your best. How did that affect your relationship with God or that person, and what did you learn from the experience?

Step 2: Commit: In what specific area of your life can you commit to offering a more sacrificial love, rather than a nominal one? How can you ensure that love becomes the "grammar" that guides your faith?

Step 3: Act: This week, make an intentional effort to "weed the garden of your heart." What practical steps will you take to remove any bitterness or negative attitudes, and how will you invite the Holy Spirit to help you grow in love?

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE:

1 JOHN 3:11-24; GENESIS 4:1-8; MATT 5:21-24

You're scrolling through social media. You come across the most beautifully considered, captivating, and convincing post. It's a solid argument, and you find yourself nodding along in agreement. You open the comments. Cue the sirens, it's the grammar police. The post has made the rookie mistake and muddled "your" and "you're", and the post maker's argument is over once someone calls the mistake out.

It's a seemingly small oversight, but bad grammar can undermine even the strongest argument. Similarly, love is the grammar of the Christian life - it's not just a part of our vocabulary, but it's the overarching rule that dictates how everything in our life flows. Love guides how we think, act, treat others, and serve God, and it's one of John's core messages in John 3.

In verse 12, John warns us to not be like Cain, who harboured hate in his heart and murdered his brother after God didn't see his sacrifice favourably. As we explore the brothers' story in Genesis 4, we can begin to understand what went wrong. When Cain offered his sacrifice, unlike his brother Abel who gave from his firstborn flock, Cain gave some of his fruits. The key word: some. It wasn't all of his fruits or the best of his crop. It was "some". It didn't cost him anything. True love has a sacrificial component. Jesus gave up His life for us. He sacrificed everything. Cain sacrificed some. A nominal exchange. But the question is, is our faith sacrificial or is our faith nominal? It's tough love, but the truth is that if our faith isn't costing us, the sacrifice we're making isn't acceptable.

We live in a culture obsessed with finding ways to mask our symptoms and soldier on, but Jesus is more concerned with the state of our hearts than the state of our lives. He goes for the root cause and the deeper issue, not the surface level symptoms, because our behaviour flows from our heart. We have to keep weeding the gardens of our hearts. By removing the roots of bitterness and trees from our old lives, we make room for the Spirit to sow new seeds that grow good fruit. Ultimately, what grows in our hearts determines the path we go down.

The saying goes that peer pressure is only as strong as family identity is weak. The household that you are a part of shapes who you are. Cain's house justifies bitterness, anger, and offence, but Christ's house champions love above all. Jesus, through the ultimate sacrifice, made a way for us to have access to the Father to be part of His family before we ever did anything to deserve it.

It all began with love. It's all about love.

DISCUSSION

1. How does the comparison between love and grammar resonate with you? In what ways do you see love as an essential framework in your daily life as a Christian?
2. What are some areas in your life where you find yourself offering “some” rather than a sacrificial and wholehearted gift to God? How can you begin to change that?
3. How do you regularly “weed the garden of your heart” to remove bitterness, anger, or other harmful attitudes? What role does love play in this process?

PRAYER

Father,

Thank you for showing us what true sacrificial love looks like through Jesus. Help us to live out that love in all areas of our lives, offering you our best and loving others as you have loved us. Uproot any bitterness or resentment in our hearts, and fill us with Your Spirit so that we can bear good fruit and reflect Your love to the world.

Amen.