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KNOWING THAT WE KNOW HIM

DON'T BE LIKE CAIN || JOHN 3:11-18

I got out of a rather dull adult gathering last Thanksgiving, by stealing away with my three granddaughters. We decided to take in a movie. So we chose our theatre, bought our tickets, settled into our overstuffed recliners with our huge buckets of hot buttered popcorn and watched "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." Most of us have seen the movie or read the book so many times you know the opening lines by heart.

Every Who down in Whoville liked Christmas a lot
But the Grinch who lived just North of Whoville did not!

The Grinch hated Christmas! The whole Christmas season!
Now, please don't ask why. No one quite knows the reason.

It could be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight.
It could be his head wasn't screwed on just right.

But I think that the most likely reason of all
May have been that his heart was two sizes too small.

But, whatever the reason, his heart or his shoes,
He stood there on Christmas Eve hating the Whos,

Dr. Suess's theology is spot on. The Grinch is incapable of love because his heart is two times too small. It's not a matter of acquiring more comfortable shoes or getting his head on straight. If the Grinch is going to love anyone, he desperately needs a new heart. And so do we.

As we continue our journey through 1 John, John brings us back to the theme of love and hate. For John, following Christ revolves around three big ideas: embracing Jesus as the Christ, walking in obedience to his commands, and loving one another the way that he loved us.

That final move is all important. We cannot claim to know Christ or that we are keeping his commands if we do not love one another. John tells us we can either be like Cain, who murdered his brother or Jesus, who laid down his life for us.

DON'T BE LIKE CAIN, WHO MURDERED HIS BROTHER (vv. 11-16)

¹¹ For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

1. According to John, why did Cain murder his brother?
2. What does it mean to belong to the evil one?
3. Why do you think Cain chose to murder his brother rather than correct his own behavior?
4. What are some of the subtle reasons that we hate (or look down on) people?
5. What do our hatreds and prejudices reveal about us?
6. How does the world treat those who are diametrically opposed to their message?
7. How should we treat those who are diametrically opposed to our message?
8. According to verse 14, what does our ability to love one another reveal about our spiritual condition?
9. What is involved in passing from death to life?
10. Why is it essential that we pass from death to life before we are even able to love one another the way Christ loved us?

BE LIKE JESUS, WHO LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US (vv. 16-18)

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1. How did Jesus lay down his life for us?
2. What does it mean for us to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters?
3. What does the stewardship of our material possessions reveal about our willingness to lay down our lives for others?
4. What happens when our "words and speech" do not match up with our "actions and beliefs?"
5. What are some deep-seated seated prejudices you need to confess to God and repent from?
6. What are some practical steps you can take to bring your actions in line with the truth of the gospel?