

Reading: 1 John 4:7-5:1

Theme: Four Relevant Applications.

When I was younger and we went to museums as children, we had to be very quiet, not touch anything and be prepared for a couple of hours of boredom as we looked round. These days many museums are geared up with audio visual displays, with interactive displays where adults and children are encouraged to learn and study by seeing, hearing and in some instances even with smelling e.g. the Jorvik Centre in York has an abundance of smells on the tour! The aim in museums or in science centres like Eureka is to make history or science come alive, be fixed in the minds of the children especially. It is now no longer enough to read or speak of these things, but try and bring them to life and show their relevance to everyday life.

The love of God is not to be something we merely speak of, or study or preach about in a dry and dusty way. God did not intend to be so. The love of God has been revealed, evidenced, seen and known in this world. We looked at this last time in v9-10 - the love of God is seen in the cross of Christ. What love we glimpsed as we looked at it briefly using 5 points: **1. The recognition of this love** - through God's word declaring it; **2. The reach of this love** - towards or among us; **3. The height of this love** - God sent His one and only Son as He gave heaven's best for us; **4. The depth of this love** - the best one was sent into this world and became the atoning sacrifice for our sins; **5. The origin of this love** - it came out from God's own essential nature as love and there is nothing deserving in us.

Those 2 verses were great verses to prepare. They were a joy, a delight, a privilege to prepare and preach on - as I tried to present something of the love of God seen in the cross of Christ. The cross is the most clear and greatest view we will ever have of God's love

and even in heaven we will adore and praise this God for His love that took our Saviour to the cross to redeem us. In v9-10 John takes us to the heights, to the sublime panoramic view of the love of God seen in the cross of Christ. Yet now in v11-12 we move from the sublime to, what some may call, the ridiculous, or at least the mundane! Now we are told what we ought to do. Here in v11-12 John tells us that the love of God is to be seen in how Christians love one another!

The cross in its actuality, its occurrence has ceased. Yes, the historic event still declares God's love toward us, but the actual crucifixion is a past historic event. Yes, it is essential to proclaim and believe in, but we cannot fly out to Jerusalem and see the actual cross, with the actual Saviour on it. The love that was revealed there is still continuing, as are its saving effects. If we cannot go and see the actual cross of Christ, how is God's love to be shown and known at this present time?

God in His wisdom, grace and mercy has left this world with up-to-date audio-visual interactive displays of His love - you and me as believers! That is quite a shock as we realise God has tied His reputation, His glory, His work of His love being revealed in this world, into our working out, showing the love of God to other Christians and people!

Let's begin to look at these verses, but we will only deal with v11 and I am using 4 headings to help us grasp some of the very pertinent and relevant applications and demands that these verses will make on us:

1. Pleasant to Practical.

John moves from the consideration of the most pleasant, glorious presentation of the love of God as seen in the cross of Christ, to a

most practical, nitty-gritty area. Yet it is not an anti-climax or a let-down with a sudden bump. Yes, it brings us back to earth, but it does so in a way that prevents us being mystics, or merely thinkers and talkers about this love, about the amazing truths we see in God showing His love in the cross of Christ.

These truths are spoken of not so we just feel all warm and gooey inside, so we can think about it and be blissfully happy, but they are spoken of to enable us to **live the life our God wants us to live**. Our lives are to be this truth personified, lived out as a reality. This love is to move us to action - to know it and to show it. This love we claim to know is to be practical and it is to affect our day by day lives and practice. John wanted these believers and all since, to be able to test those who claimed great things, as well as their own lives, but what he says here is a verse that really tests where we stand spiritually. Also we see it is:

2. A Duty and a Privilege.

John takes us back to God's love revealed in the cross of Christ "*if or since or so God loved us*" - we are given the example, the standard of God so loving us. John says since, or if God so loved us and then He shows us that, it is our duty and privilege, our responsibility and privilege to love one another as believers.

John says that since God so loved us, we ought to love one another. This word "ought" was a word that struck me. It is firstly in the present continuous tense - we are constantly under this obligation, but secondly it is a word that means "*ought, owe, be bound, be one's duty, be a debtor, be indebted*". Because of God so loving and showing us that love, we are duty bound, in debt to God to love one another.

In Matthew 18:21ff the Lord Jesus spoke of a king who had a servant who owed him 10,000 talents. One talent equalled 20 years pay for a labourer, so 200,000 years pay and as we noted this morning we are talking of millions of pounds. He couldn't pay; the king ordered him to be thrown into prison and all he had to be sold, including his wife and children. The man begs for time and he would pay it all back!!! The king then promptly forgave him all his debt. The same servant went out, saw someone who owed him 100 denarii which was equivalent of 100 day's wages, a 3rd of a year's pay. The forgiven servant grabbed this one, started to choke him and demanded payment. This other servant begged as he had previously, using the same words, but the 1st servant had him thrown into prison! Other servants told the king, who then said to the 1st servant (Matthew 18:32-33) *'You wicked servant, he said, I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow-servant just as I had on you?'* Then the king had him thrown into prison until he should pay back all he owed.

If we know the amazing love of God and all that He has forgiven us, then we need to not only to know it but to show the love of God in practical ways. John here underlines that we ought to love one another and that also includes forgiving from the heart - love often works out at that level, as well as doing them positive good.

Do we see it is an immense privilege to love other believers? As we saw on a previous occasion, the world will not love believers, cannot love believers. We have come to know God's love and forgiveness and we are to realise there are others who have this great honour and in Christ we are family, all saved by His death on the cross, all recipients of His love. We should count it a privilege to love them. Yet they are not perfect - but neither are we! Yes, there will be times when we will clash, we will rub one

another up the wrong way, whether intentionally or unintentionally, we all will have rough edges to rub off and each one of us will have our tender spots if that happens. Yet we are duty bound, have the privilege to love them as God loves us.

There can be no excuses, for we are duty bound by God loving us in the way that He did (v9-10). We will have to ignore the cross and all Christ did there to say that we don't have to love another believer. If we can do that, then we should fear for our own salvation! Yet it should not just be a duty, for as we know more of God's love, it should fill us, thrill us and cause us to want to love other believers, indeed the world and we would consider it an honour and privilege to love, however feebly, one that God loves enough to send His Son to die for. We are to recognise this duty, but also, we are to see it is a great privilege also. Moving on we see:

3. Self and Others.

When we get annoyed, irritated, fed up, let down, cheesed off, hurt, offended with and by other believers, then we are not just to lash out or blame them. We to pause a moment or 5; we are to think of ourselves and think of the other person and learn to think biblically and spiritually.

Sadly, we usually think of ourselves - that we have been wronged, ignored, dealt with unfairly, criticised unjustly. Yet this verse says to us *“Hold on a minute! God loves you so much, remember that love we see of in v9-10.”* Who are we before God? A sinner, lost, dead in trespasses and sins; having a hateful nature to God and to others. We were, to a lesser or greater extent, centred on self - self-centred, self-asserting, self-conceited, self-indulgent, self-pleasing, self-seeking, self-pitying, self-sensitive, self-defensive, self-sufficient, self-conscious, self-righteous, self-glorifying and

self-deluded. How we need to realise those things and to be warned that even as believers we have the potential to be still self-centred in many, if not all those ways.

Self has to die to live in Christ as v9-10 shows us we could do nothing to help ourselves, but needed God's unconditional, self-generated love - not that we loved God, but He loved us. We are to look at ourselves in the light of God's love - undeserved free love and see we are no one really. Who then can insult us, mock us, make out we are no good - didn't the gospel tell us that and we agreed with it else we would not have gone to the Saviour for salvation.

When self seems to fill our gaze, we are to get ourselves in the centre of the gospel telescope and see what we are by nature and after we have focused on our self with the gospel telescope, then focus on the other person as it will help us to realise what v11 tells us. As we do so, turn the gospel telescope around and view things from the gospel end - the big end of the telescope and then the other person's ways and offences will look a lot smaller!

What we need to see is the real person and not the things they do or say. We are to see people as precious souls, as lost souls if they're not believers, as souls precious to our Father if they are a believer. We are to see sin's effects being worked out in them and us. Yes, we are responsible for our own actions, but sin affects us all in our lives - whether it is through past events in our nature and lives, or personalities etc. We are all sensitive to certain things and react illogically. We are to try and differentiate between a person and their actions.

We know our heavenly Father does not love sin, but He loved us when we were sinners and enemies - because He looked beyond

what we did, said, thought, even our rebellious sinful nature and He saw the soul He wanted to save. When my Nan, on my mother's side, was dying of cancer, even though she was being sick, messing herself, my mum and her 2 sisters continued to nurse her at home. They hated the disease with a passion, but loved her even more. Since God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

As we pause to consider God's love, we are also to see the other believer as a joint heir with us of heaven and of salvation. They are not possible, probable enemies. We are to see them as those with whom we were united in sin, but now we are united with them in the so great salvation God has provided by His Son. We are to see one another as fellow pilgrims and will one day be in the same heaven, praising the same Saviour. All this is down to the same love of God for us and so we are to love fellow believers. God's love will cause us to see self and others in a different light, from a different perspective and we are to love one another. Yet see:

4. Reason and Resources.

We have already touched upon this as we've gone through the points, but God's love is the reason we are to love one another as believers and also God's love is the resource we draw from, for we are not sufficient in and of ourselves. We are to want to be like our Father in heaven, but we see so much failure in our abilities, hearts, lives and love. So, we are to go to Him for that love - for it to be shed abroad in our hearts more and more (Romans 5:5) and we are to pray for one another to know it better as Ephesians 3:17-19 says. It is not optional, but it is expected.

We are to be audio-visual interactive demonstrations of the love of God in the places we live, work, rest, play and worship God. We are not to merely talk Christian talk, but live and love as Christ

would have us do - as we learn from John 13:34-35 *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

We need to pray that we would all know and show such love and that the love of God shown to us in the cross of Christ would stir and move us to do so.