

WEDNESDAY 02 November 2022 "Radical Love" (1 John 4:7,8)

Hello, my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Lately I've been stirred to consider the amount of violence and hatred that is evident all around our world. How many hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions of people, live in great fear or profound pain as a result? Of course, we see it in the terrible war in the Ukraine, and the Tigray region of Ethiopia, or recent anarchy in Haiti and Myanmar. We have seen it in the harsh put down of cries for freedom and democracy in Hong Kong, or riots in many US cities related to racial tension over the past year or two. Beyond that, sadly, we see terrible statistics about girls enslaved in sex trafficking or too many young people involved in violent gangs. Oh my, the anger, and pain, and terror which seems to be destroying our human race! So, what's the answer, the antidote to this?

Let's rejoin the apostle John as he's writing his first letter, for I believe he's addressing this very issue as he picks up his parchments and stylus to write his 4th chapter, sometime in the late first century. ***"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love."*** (1 John 4:7,8)

Now perhaps if you remember the 1960's you're rolling your eyes as you remember the Hippie movement and what some felt was the craziness of those years. Of course, if you step back and remember the horribleness of the Vietnam war and other horrific inhumane things which were happening in our world in those times, you may recall that the young generations were crying out to the adult generations, the lawmakers, the military leaders, the governments of our world, *to stop the killing and find some way to get along with each other as human beings.*

In truth, my friends, the first century in which John was writing was much worse than the 1960's in our world or even today. The Roman Empire leadership were ruthless and bloodthirsty. Jerusalem was destroyed in ad70, the great Jewish Temple burned to the ground, and both Jews and Christians were horrifically persecuted for decades, all around the known world in those days.

John is not talking about a political peace movement, but rather do you see John is calling us to consider several vital, important truths about God and us, the human race, God designed and creates one person at a time. John's simple three-word statement ***"God is love"*** is a cornerstone truth to all truth. *Almighty, Holy God, the creator of the Universe and the designer and creator of all human life, has several essential character traits which frame all that God does.* **HOLY** is one of those God character traits. God cannot do evil, He cannot lie, God cannot sin nor tempt a person to sin, according to James 1:13. God is also **LOVE**. It means everything God does emanates from His Love, His Grace.

It means the relationship God desires to develop with humanity as a global population, and with each individual person and each marriage, each family, is a relationship of **HOLY LOVE**. *But think about how difficult that is for God when we as humans are exactly the opposite of that.*

*We human beings have a **sin nature** which thinks, says, and acts wicked, evil, harmful, totally **unholy!** We have a **selfish nature** which always prefers ourselves over anyone else, and in that selfishness, LOVE is not normally the primary motivator for our relationships, or our words or actions. Sadly, way too often when we humans do extend love to another person, it's manipulative love, it's hypocritical love, it's love expecting something in return. *In our natural human selves, we simply do not know how, nor can we muster the courage to love unconditionally; nor do we know how, nor can we find within ourselves the ability to live holy, God honoring lives!* Now, think about that for a moment, my friends!*

So, you see, John is challenging the entire human race, of every generation, through all time in history, to realize this remarkable reality: *God is Holy, and God is Love and God intentionally, by many different strategies, seeks to build loving, honorable, holy relationships with **wicked human beings**. Do you see how impossible that is without a fundamental character change in us? If my sinful, wicked nature isn't changed, then an authentic, genuine, loving relationship with Holy, Love nature God is **impossible!** So, *John therefore challenges us to look closely at ourselves to see if in fact, we have been changed, fundamentally, at the very core of our being?* Have we recognized our sin problem, our suffocating sin nature, and have we invited Jesus to rescue us, to deliver us from our sin?*

Have we asked God to birth in us a new, holy, spiritual nature, by the power of His Holy Spirit? Have we asked God to so transform us, so that we are a people who not only understand God's love, but we can receive His love daily and powerfully, and as it changes us, we can in turn flow out God's love from us to other people... in our marriages, our families, and all our relationships?

You see friends, once again John is asking us to stand in front of the mirror and look deeply and honestly at ourselves. Perhaps you might need to ask a dear friend, your spouse maybe, to help you with this self-analysis: *Is what John writes true in your life or not? "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God because God is love."* Which phrase describes you and me... **born of God and knows God**, or **"does not love, does not know God because God is love"!**?

Now one more thing my friends, be careful that you understand and use the word **LOVE** as John intended it here and as God defines love and expects His love to be seen in His people. Jesus said it this way: **"Love one another as I have loved you."** (John 13:34)

So, the measurement, the standard for the love God desires in our relationship with Him and in how we love each other is the same self-sacrificing, selfless love Jesus modeled for us throughout His life, but especially as He was rejected and abused by those whom God sent Jesus to love.

This is so important I call us to pause right here and do some really deep self-analysis. Take your journal friends and do some writing about what you understand and have experienced with God's love toward you, and how you see God's life changing love is working in your life, and finally... how you are, or are not, extending God's love to others. Spend some time asking God to help you see yourself the way HE sees you! And here's a song that will help us in self-analysis and worship.

Today's Scripture is 1 John 4:7, 8.