

## July 17, 2022: Light and love in God

The message of John's first epistle, as we have seen these past two weeks, isn't difficult or complicated; it's clear and direct: when we walk in the light of God, of God's Word, of God's Son, Jesus Christ, we have communion with God and communion with our fellow-believers in the church; we have light and life in God. Then today's message fits well in that context as well: everyone who claims to be united with God in Christ shows love to each other! Love one another, that's the message John repeats over and over, approaching it from different angles, in different contexts, saying: love one another! The truth of your faith, hope, and love in Christ shows in your life of communion in God, of walking in His ways of life and light, and of loving your neighbour!

As we are looking at John's 1<sup>st</sup> epistle, dear listeners in chapter 2: 6-11, we see him go back to the ABC in the life of people who claim to know God: to the command to love. The Lord Jesus had reminded the apostles, so now John points back to the law of *old* as well: heed the law of love! Yet, at the same time, John holds up the law of love as a *new* command! Why? Well, it's not John's own view of this command of love that he calls it new, John echoes the Lord Jesus Himself, who said [Jn. 13:34], "A *new* command I give you: Love one another." Ever since Christ came on earth, He gave it a new radiance! John knows that very well; he, personally, basked in its radiance, i.e. in the love of Christ! He saw it, experienced it, and witnessed how it was applied in any and all situations and circumstances! The Lord Jesus obeyed this command perfectly and consistently, which gave it a new dimension and radiance; Christ showed its light in life!

Indeed, what a wonderful and amazing experience this must have been for John and the other disciples, dear listeners, to see this command of love fulfilled and practised by someone! That's unique! Christ showed true love and He showed it to the end! By His love even unto death He gave it a new dimension, a new radiance! Hence, the Lord Jesus could rightfully add in John 13, "A new command I give you: Love one another! *As I have loved you, so* you must love one another!" He calls it a new command, since now He can reiterate it as a command that He Himself had kept and that He now makes the characteristic of true discipleship! No, that's not to say that His disciples should just follow His example, but they should love one another in Him, walking in His light! He is the light of the world and every one who walks in His light and is united with Him, shows this in walking the same way as He did! When you love you radiate His light, because you walk in His light!

You see, dear listeners, then John's address of his readers takes on a deeper dimension too. John writes, "Beloved!" That's a direct reference to Christ's love for them and their love in Christ! The word John uses, has as root word the well-known word for love: agape, sacrificial love, giving love, unconditional love. It's a love which doesn't first see whether there is something loveable in the other, but a love that seeks the other, that gives itself to the other, and that does everything for the other! It's that love that God showed in coming to this world that was lost in sin; it's God's love who loved us while we were yet sinners, enemies; it's the love of God in Christ who has come to you and me to seek us in love! That's a love which is one-sided in its origin: He saw you and me in the misery in which we found ourselves and He showed compassion. He bore with our loveless

attitude and suffered for our hatred and envy, giving Himself up for us completely; thus, He fulfilled for us and in our place the law of love! That's how much He loved us!

Now this is the true light that is shining in the world, dear listener. There has never been a man in this world who radiated light this clearly and brightly, namely the light of Christ's incomparable and incomprehensible love! Yes, it is this light that Christ shone in His life on earth; it's also the light, John adds, that's still shining in this world, namely in you, if and when you are united with Christ by faith! For a little while it seemed as if the darkness overcame the light and that it was snuffed out when He died for the love He had shown to men; no one loved Him in return, it seemed. Yet, when He was hanging in utter darkness, He bore all lovelessness and carried it away; then, when the light went on again, and after He had risen from the dead, He cast His light around Himself in ever brighter radiance, showing its reflection in the lives of those around Him too!

This is John's message, dear listener, and what a wonderful gospel it is in the midst of a world in which we see so much darkness! What evidence of lovelessness, of hatred and envy, of egoism and selfishness, of war and violence, we see in this world; yes, even in our own lives and among us too at times. John knows about that too and is aware of the darkness that persists. Yet, he may observe as well that this darkness is passing; it's moved away constantly; while the light that Christ has brought into the world continues to shine and spread. He is and continues to be the Light of the world! No one can extinguish this light or turn it off; the darkness keeps passing away; Christ's victory of light over the darkness in this world continues to show and prove itself! No one can stop the spreading of the love of God in Jesus Christ, as the gospel of light is being proclaimed! That's what we may be assured of, by faith, by faith in the light of His love!

The Lord Jesus Christ, dear listener, came into the world to manifest and reveal the love of His Father in heaven. He showed His love, projecting it and presenting it in His entire life and in all that He did. Then we note that John does not include illustrations, examples, or references to Jesus' life and walk on earth; he assumes his readers know. They know from years of preaching how the Lord Jesus' love went much farther than the level of friendships and favouritism. The Jesus did not restrict His love to those people only whom He liked, or who showed love to Him, or people with whom He felt He could talk or who would talk with Him, or to people who agreed with Him and cooperated the way he wanted them, or to people of the same tribe or village or background; no, He crossed every boundary and overcame every obstacle and personal preference or favour or liking, even showing love to His enemies! Yes, His love didn't just entail feelings for others but was evident in what He did for them!

Then, what is so special, so wonderful in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, dear listeners, is, what John highlights: the fact that His love is true; His light is true: i.e. He combined love with truth, light with truth! That's how He still is coming to us, dear listener, in the proclamation of His Word in the church! This is what the Voice of the Church is all about: it is the truth about love, about light, about life, about union and communion with God in Jesus Christ! That's why this program, too, calls you to Christ, to His people, that you may share in this union and communion, in His love and light and life!