

I John 2:15-17

Pentecost 6; July 16 & 17, 2017

“She loves me, she loves me not. She love me, she loves me not. She love me, she loves me not.” We all know the words of that familiar game. After each phrase is said, a petal is removed from the flower. When you are down to one petal, you will get the answer as to whether or not he/she loves you. The goal for most people is to get to the last petal while saying the phrase: *she loves me*.

We all have a desire to be loved. How many of you here today want to be loved? Nobody likes to be hated by someone. We all desire to be liked. It’s one of the reasons that something like Facebook is so successful. We like to receive a blue thumb pointing up instead of pointing down. The more “likes” we get, the better. Right? Even if you have no idea what Facebook is, everyone would prefer to be liked by people than not. We like to love, and we like to be loved.

In this short letter of only 5 chapters that John writes, John uses the word “love” over 50 times. He tells us to love one another; he tells us how love drives out fear; he tells us that God loved us first; we love God by obeying his commands; and the list could continue on and on... It is John, in his Gospel, who wrote the words that almost everyone knows by heart: **“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...”** John understood Jesus’ love for this world. He understood how much people needed to know that they are loved by the only one who can love perfectly.

But John also knew that there were people who were trying to get Jesus’ followers to doubt God’s love. They wanted them to think that they needed more knowledge than the knowledge that God had given in his Word. There were those that taught that it really didn’t really matter how you lived your life. What mattered was your knowledge. If you had this “secret” spiritual knowledge not found in the Bible, then you were something special. As this movement gained momentum, John is pleading with Christians to not leave the Church.

So, John writes the words of our text as a warning: **“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.”** It isn’t that the things of this world are always bad. God has blessed each of here today with many of those blessings. What he is saying though, is that it is so easy for the world to push out the love for God and replace it for the love of the world. We go along with the sinful actions of the world because we want to be liked by the world. Who’s going to like us if we don’t like the things of this world? The lie of the world is that it often promises us something that it cannot deliver. It promises happiness NOW. It promises immediate gratification. If you just do what the world likes, everyone will like you. It feels good, doesn’t it?

In some ways, every commercial that we see or read is trying to get us to think that if we buy what they offer, we will buy happiness. If you go to a certain restaurant, and buy their food, that food will make you happy. And so, you go there because you have this picture of the perfect sandwich in your mind. Then you wait. You see the server coming with your food. She sets it down before you, and you soon realize that the picture in your mind doesn’t exactly match up with the food on your plate. Therefore, you find yourself disappointed instead of being filled with happiness. This world will fail to give exactly what it promises.

That’s John’s point in our text. **“For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”**

A few years ago there was a 99-year old man from Italy named Antonio. He was a married man – married to 96 year old woman named Rosa. Together, they had built a marriage that lasted 77 years. It wasn’t always a perfect marriage, but they had weathered the bumps along the way. But then one day, it all changed. Antonio was rifling through an old chest of drawers when he made the discovery a few days before Christmas. He found a stack of letters that his wife had kept. She wrote the letters to her lover during a secret affair in the 1940’s. Even though the affair had happened over 60 years before, Antonio filed for divorce, making them the world’s oldest couple to divorce. For a brief moment of **“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”** a 77 year old marriage came to an end. Whatever happiness that there had been in that moment, the moment passed away.

You see that is what sin does. It makes a promise that it can't keep. It promises us happiness that will not last. So, what do we do? We lay those sins at the foot of the cross, and let Jesus give us true happiness that will last forever. We replace those moments of sin with God's love. **"The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."** We give thanks that Jesus was perfectly devoted to his heavenly Father. He took all those moments of sin and desires and put them on the back of His Son – Jesus. Then Jesus died for them. Our sins are forgiven.

Last week was a crazy week here at St. Paul's. We had about 140 kids attend our Vacation Bible Camp. By Friday, I was getting a little tired. But I want to share with you a brief moment that happened that made it all worthwhile. One of the young children that came up to her grandmother and said to her: *Did you know that Jesus died for me! Yes, I know. No, no, no he died FOR ME!* Jesus died for me. He died for you. Jesus loves me. Jesus loves you. That is a love that will never fail us. Amen.