

INI-SDG

In the Name of Jesus – To God Alone the Glory

5.17.2009 Rogate Sunday – St. Stephen Lutheran (West Bay) Mountain View, CA

Good morning again dear fellow beloved of God. Grace, mercy, and peace continue to be with you from the one true God of all love, the Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Every day we need to **Put “Love” to the Test**. We find that word love all around us whether it is in hearing or speaking about love, or if it is in showing or receiving love. Last week we celebrated mother’s day. Soon enough we will be celebrating father’s day. How many greetings cards do you think for just these two days will have the word “love” on them? More than that, if you turn on the radio how many songs are sung about love? More than that, about how many times a day do you have opportunity to show love to someone else in your interaction with the rest of this world? If love is such a big part of our lives, then it makes sense that we would want to understand it better everyday. And so today also we have opportunity to hear and speak more about the word love, but a love shown and received from the God of all true love. We pray that we will continue to gladly hear Him teach each one of us much more about this most important word for our lives; and bless us in our study this morning in showing us through His Word how to **Put “Love” to the Test**.

NIV 1 John 4:1-11 1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

We pause here for a moment after verse three. There is a well written pamphlet done by two of our CLC pastors I recently found not to long ago that I have made a lot of use recently. It is based on 1 John 4:1. The pamphlet is entitled, **“Test the Spirits.”** It was written for the reason, and I quote of “two great concerns that led to the establishment of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in 1960. They were and remain:

- 1) The concern for upholding the full truth of God’s Word, and the precious Gospel which is the seed of life, and the power unto salvation.
- 2) Concern at the inroads of error manifest through false teaching. False teaching sows confusion among God’s people, and endangers their faith. False teaching causes loss of confidence in God’s Word, and may well lead, if unchecked, to the loss of eternal life.”

It goes on to say, “It has been a long held and time tested principle within the orthodox [true teaching] Lutheran Church that the official doctrinal position of a church is determined by what is taught in its schools, preached from its pulpits, and written in its official publications. We subscribe to this principle.”

But you ask what does this **testing of the spirits** have to do with love? **Hebrews 10:23** encourages ***Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering: for He is faithful that promised.*** So many marriages today run into the problem of a lack of true love, a lack of faithfulness from one or both spouses. But here we see true love from our Lord and Savior who *is* our Good Shepherd, who *is* the True Vine, and just as important... who ***is faithful.*** We test the spirits of this age as verse 1 of our text says **because many false prophets have gone out into the world.** Therefore, to **Put “Love” to the Test**, we start with:

1. Recognition

In speaking about the deceitfulness and unfaithfulness of mankind, David poetically describes those who speak lies saying ***You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth (Ps 52:3).*** Our Lord continues to help us understand this morning His defining of love as it is first most a love for His Word. We might make a similar confession to David by saying, “I love the Word of truth, not falsehood!” But why is this so important? **2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God...** Last week we mentioned how apart from the True Vine, ***no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).*** And similarly today we learn from the Word of God that we are able to recognize false teachers which would pervert, twist, and distort the precious saving Word of our Lord.

As Mark and I finished up our instruction and informational study of what our church here at St. Stephen teaches, it was a delight for me to hear what he confesses about his Lord and Savior, and what the Word of God means to him in his life... just like we heard him confess a moment ago. What a joy it is for each one of us to see what scripture so clearly teaches. That when it comes to matters of faith in God's Word we are to continue as Jesus told us in ***teaching them everything I have commanded you... (Matt 20:19)***. That we are to be on "the same page" as believers as Mark also once stated to me so well. For we know very well what the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth that ***all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought (1 Cor. 1:10)***. That's why I'm a member of this church and the CLC, because we continue to strive to abide in the Word of Christ no matter what challenges or persecution it may bring. And we *know* that there will be both! Verse 3 of our text says **but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.**

At the time of Jesus were there already antichrists?

4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

2. Distinction

We RECOGNIZE that the day and age we live in continues to thrive where antichristian teachings are what we are facing each day. Quoting again from "Test the Spirits" we see how true it is that: "There is a common approval... in the pursuit of unity; even when such are made at the expense of the Christian witness. Toleration is asked even for outright denial of such basic Biblical teaching as the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the natural sinfulness of man, and the redemption through Christ alone." Two chapters before our text John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote ***16 For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. 18 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour (1 John 2:16-18)***.

When we love someone or something, as in the case we are speaking about today... God, and His Word; we will ***test the spirit*** of every word that is spoken by man, to *recognize* if it is the Word of God. This is showing true "love," in the proper and truest sense. It is a love that will recognize a lack of love for truth and make a **DISTINCTION** between the two in ultimately clinging to the only Word that leads to eternal life. This is how we begin to **Put "Love" to the Test**. It is a selfless, self sacrificing love for what we love most in our lives. We see this truest form of love from our God. **4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.**

There's a lot of talk these days about what kind of world view defines what kind of person that you are. So what do we have? Do I have a worldly world view? Does that even make sense? Or do I have a Godly or Christ centered world view? Might we need to make a **DISTINCTION**? **5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us.** It is God who gives us **OUR** view on the world and molds us to His image as He continues to teach, admonish, and instruct us in righteous living... so that we may glorify Him as our Creator and Heavenly Father. That is who He is, and that is who we are as His children as verse 6 also shows that **This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood**. This is the distinction that is made by God himself.

Just under a year ago little Molly began being knit together by the Lord's hand in her mother's womb, and has been washed today with the water and Word of God which through the power of God creates and preserves faith in true love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The One who is in Molly is the One who is in you who believe and trust in that Savior of the world. HIS world view was to save the world from sin defeat the prince of this world- the devil! That is what Jesus Christ came to do and did! That is why verse 4 confidently confirms for children of God that **the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.** In seeing this truest form of self sacrificing love we thank and praise our Lord and Savior, and Lord-willing we will ask each day... what can I do for my Savior to show this same love that He has shown me?

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

3. Application

There is a key phrase in these verses that is often misapplied. You'll hear it when someone is defending something they did wrong, a sinful lifestyle they continue to lead, or an attitude that they feel they have the right to express... it is the phrase here from 1 John 4:8 **God is love.** Somehow that quickly gets changed around in our selfish world and is suggested that everything that has to do with love, even if it is sinful, comes from God. Is that true love? Does God want us to continue in sin, continue dishonoring His name and the name He's given us, continue in discrediting the blood He shed for us on the cross? The context of this verse, chapter, and all of God's Word quite easily defines the type of self-LESS love that **comes from God.** Look at verse 7, that's why the Lord reminds us that **everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.** The word here for love is the same Greek word Jesus used with Peter after denying Him three times. Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him as a friend, or if Peter loved Him enough to be willing to die for Him and His Word.

We aren't talking about a self serving, self excusing love here at all! Look back to verse **9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.** My dear friends in Christ, this is how we **Put "Love" to the Test!** We first RECOGNIZE the dangers that are being spread throughout the world of the lies of the devil and false teachers who would compromise God's Word of Truth. We make a DISTICTION between these worldly speakers who would have us focus on this side of heaven and not on truly and rightly showing the DISTICTION between the meaningless love of man and the meaningful love of God. God's love, keeps us rejoicing in our risen Savior. God's love, keeps us looking forward to spending eternity with Him in heaven.

Guess what, it is only in *recognizing* through the Word of God this *distinction* in love, that we will ever begin to truly and properly make the APPLICATION of a self less love in our lives; to carry out as we are told here in **11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** Today, tomorrow, and every day you have on this earth... in every single one of your relationships, and especially with your relationship with your Savior and His Word, **Put "Love" to the Test!** Let's not kid ourselves, **10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. AMEN!**

This LOVE of God that surpasses all understanding will guard and keep your hearts and your minds in our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.