

Love Walks

What pictures enter into your mind when you think of the Apostle, John? Do you think of the young man who ran with the older Peter to the tomb and then didn't go inside? Do you think of John with his brother, James? Do you think of them acting together as the "Sons of Thunder", like Jesus called them? Sometimes I picture John that way, as a young man, full of energy. But, that is not the person we meet in the words we read this morning. This morning we meet the old John. We meet a man who has served his Savior for decades. We see a shepherd who has been exiled to an island miles away from the people he served. We see a man who is torn up inside over the fact, that now that he is gone, wolves are coming in to tear his flock apart. And so, what does our aging, veteran pastor do? He does the only thing he can. He prays for his flock. And he writes to them. In his second letter to them we find these words: *2John 4 It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. 5 And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another."*

What is it that gives him comfort and joy? He rejoices that their love walks. Their love isn't a wimpy, worthless love. It didn't lie down and let itself be run over. No, it walked and worked and showed itself. And where did it walk? It walked in the truth. You see, John wanted to let them know that one of the most important ways they could show their love was to know the truth of God's word—and not just some of God's word, but all of it. True love walks in the truth. It doesn't "cherry pick" what it wants and leave the rest. And here is where we see our very own sin. Inside every one of us there is a person who does not want to hear God's word—at least *all* of it. We like the parts which speak of forgiveness. We like the parts which speak the sins that *other* people do. But when it speaks to the sins we commit, we don't like that.

In stark contrast to our *love*, we see our Savior. We see him speaking the truth in love to his friends and to his enemies. We see our Savior speaking the truth in love to us. He tells us of our sins. He dies for our sins. He rises from the dead to guarantee that our sins are forgiven. And, still to this day, he carries our sins and burdens. *that* is the sort of love our Savior has for us. It is a love that walks in the truth. But the love he has for us and gives to us is far more than that. John tells his people: *6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. "*

John reminded his flock in the clearest possible way that he could that love was not just something we know. It's also something we show. Love doesn't just walk in the truth. It walks in obedience. And, here again we see Jesus showing us what this sort of love is. We remember the command that Jesus gave to his disciples. There they were, in the upper room on Maundy Thursday. They were fighting with each other about who of them was the greatest. And Jesus knew—he knew that only hours from now they would all leave him and he would suffer alone for their sins and the sins of the entire world. So, instead of telling them what true Christian love was, he showed them. He wrapped a towel around himself. He got down on the floor and washed the sweat, the dirt, the grime that was on their feet and ankles. Just as surely as he wash and scrub away their sins by dying on the cross, he now washed the dirt from their feet. You see, the love that Jesus had, it *walked*. It didn't just know. It didn't just speak. It walked. It showed itself.

It showed itself to them and it shows itself to us today. How often have we done the same as those disciples? How often have we thought we were better than we were? How often did we speak about love and never show it? The love that Jesus has walked in the truth, and it also walked in obedience to his Father's command.

And he has given that love to us as a gift. We didn't ask for it. We didn't earn it. We have Christ's love for us in our hearts. And now it is time for us not just to know the truth, but to show it. It is time for us to obey what Christ invites and commands. It is time for us to love one another.

So, let me ask you: Does your love walk? Or does it crawl? I would love to partner with you and think up new, wonderful ministries for our congregation. I would love to find ways to reach out and serve our community. But, it costs money. It cost to have a good Vacation Bible School or Soccer Camp. When we aren't even reaching our budget, how can we spend extra money on evangelism? So, let me ask you, does your love walk? Or, is your love

weak? I would love to partner with you and have a Vacation Bible School and other activities. And you might even want that too. You might even want great activities and ministries here at this church. But, would you come? Every year we have Vacation Bible School. Every year, parents drop off their children and leave. Every year, many in our congregation do not even come to the adult bible class. And so, let me ask you: Does your love walk? Or does it lie lying flat? And what about your prayers? How often do you pray—not just about yourself? How often do you pray about those that you don't know? How often do you pray that people would find out about our church? How often do you pray that we would be able to reach out and bring people into our church? How often do you pray that God would use *you* to share his truth with those around you? Does your love walk? Or is it in the emergency room, on life support?

My brothers and sisters, it's time. It's time for our love to walk in obedience to Christ's command. If you do not think you can show Christ's love with your money, then just open up God's word to those promises that God speaks to you at the end of Matthew, chapter 6: ` `27 *Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Matt. 6:28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* If you do not think you can show Christ's love with your actions, then read in John 13 about our Savior, who washed dirty feet and cleansed filthy souls. If you cannot find the time to pray, then read God's word and be reminded how desperately our Father wants to hear our prayers and answer them. Then, when your love walks in the truth it will walk in obedience to Christ's command. Amen.