

w/b 21<sup>st</sup> May 2017 Letters from the last man standing - 1&2 John

THEME: LOVE AND HATE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

PASSAGE: 1 John 3:11-18 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

<sup>12</sup> Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. <sup>13</sup> Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. <sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

<sup>16</sup> This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

**Genesis 4:1-5 (NIVUK)**

**Cain and Abel**

Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.'<sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> But Abel also brought an offering – fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.'

<sup>8</sup> Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?'

'I don't know,' he replied. 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

<sup>10</sup> The LORD said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup> Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup> When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.'

## LAUNCH

'Wise' sayings about anger and hatred from the Pinterest bad mood board:

- *When you get angry take a breath, count to ten and punch them on 8. No one expects that*
  - *Haters only hate the people they can't have or the people they can't be*
  - *I hate the fact that some get judged for being real while others get loved for being fake*
  - *They don't hate you, they hate themselves and they take it out on you. You need to know the difference*
  - *Holding on to anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die*
  - *The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong*
- Which do you agree with and which are dodgy?
  - Which do you identify with the most right now?

## DISCOVERY

What do we learn about Cain from these 2 passages?

What do we learn about Christ from these 2 passages?

What is interesting about the way in which the Lord deals with Cain in the Genesis passage?

## UNDERSTANDING

As mentioned in the sermon the suggestion is (not conclusively agreed by all commentators) that Abel was righteous because he focused on faith and sacrifice (counted to him as righteousness) whilst Cain was interested in his own performance

This led to competition, jealousy, hatred and ultimately murder

- Are there areas of work, life or even church life where you might be tempted to be competitive in an unhealthy way? What negative thoughts can you have at such times and what can you do about it?
- How does the world creep in and influence us to be thoroughly un-Christ like in these areas

Think about some of the questions from the Lance De Witt book: Replenish.

Be honest with yourself and one another

- Are you decreasing whilst Christ is increasing?
- Are you making much of Christ in your conversations or subtly drawing the attention of others to your own abilities?
- In your particular ministry are you hogging all the good stuff for yourself or do you take as much delight in the performance of others?
- Do you have friends who can genuinely tell you when you are becoming too big for your boots? (remember the Mike Pilavachi story)

Consider Galatians 2:20 -

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

What 'I' elements of your life still need to be put to death?

Why would loss of identity in self and complete acceptance of identity in Christ remove all competition, jealousy, and anger (or would it?)

#### APPLICATION

- Spend time praying for areas of church life that you or your group are not directly involved in eg Pumas, Bublees, Friday night youth club, Games club, Barnum and Themba, Oak Tree Café, Jublees other small groups. Pray for the leaders of those ministries
- Pray for one another that 'I' would decrease and Christ would increase
- Pray that you would become a wonderful encourager of others in the church (a Barnabus, if you like who enhanced the ministry of Paul, John Mark and many others)