

**Sermon Brief**  
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May 8, 2022

**Text:** 1 Peter 3:8-12

**Title:** “Let Your Love Flow”

**Subject:** The church is called to declare God’s goodness to the world.

**Complement:** That goodness needs to be shown both inwardly and outwardly.

**Textual Idea:** The Church is called to declare God’s goodness to the world by loving one another within and blessing those outside.

**Sermon Idea:** Believers are called to a lifestyle of harmony, humility, and honoring.

**Interrogative:** Am I leading a life of love?

**Key Points:**

1. Internal integrity: love one another. Thank God for a family in a hostile world!
2. External integrity: love your enemies. Thank God for who He is and His ultimate justice!

**What do I want people to know?** I want people to know that we are ambassadors of the kingdom of God called to make Christ known. To do that, we must show the world the goodness of God by loving one another and blessing those who curse us.

**What do I want people to do?** I want people to (1) thank God for your church family, (2) pray for those who hurt/oppose them, and (3) thank God for who He is and His justice.

**What need am I addressing?** I am addressing the need to live lives that honor God in the midst of a pagan society.

## “Let Your Love Flow”

1 Peter 3:8-12

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I closed my sermon two weeks ago saying that biblical marriage is like **(LCD) ballroom dancing**. In ballroom dancing, the man leads, and the woman follows; but the whole point is so that the woman can shine, that the man might present her as radiant before the crowds. In a similar way, in scripture, the church is called the bride of Christ and Jesus’ servant-leadership causes it to shine to the glory of God in the world. We’re dancing with Jesus! Yet even though Jesus is a great dancer, a great leader, we, the church, His bride, are not great partners! The result is a mess as John Stott once put it, **(LCD) “The problem we experience, whenever we think about the church, concerns the tension between the ideal and the reality. The ideal is beautiful...but in reality, we who claim to be the church are often a motley rabble of rather scruffy individuals, half-educated and half-saved, uninspired in our worship, constantly bickering with each other, concerned more for our maintenance than our mission, struggling and stumbling along the road...”** Can you relate to that? Ever felt that way about the church? How can we be better dance partners with Jesus?

We’re in a sermon series on the book of 1 Peter which I’ve entitled, **(LCD) Alien Living in a Chaotic World**. The people Peter wrote to were struggling to live faithfully for Jesus in a pagan society. In the first chapter and a half, he tells them who they are in Christ and then gives them this directive in 1 Peter 2:11-12, **(LCD) “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”** The two main points are that ambassadors for Jesus represent Him in this chaotic world by **(LCD) living with integrity within us, and within the world**, thereby causing people to glorify God.

Peter then applies this to different social circles that believers in Peter’s day struggled with and that we do too: **(LCD) submitting to governing authorities – even Nero, working for mean masters, loving spouses in difficult marriages, and getting along with others** which is what we’re focusing on today; let’s read it. 1 Peter 3, verse 8, *“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. 11 They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*

The first thing to note is that Peter is talking about two different groups of people to get along with: the church in verse 8 and those outside the church who oppose it in verses 9-12. This is consistent with our two umbrella verses I just mentioned: integrity within - our love for each other, and integrity in the world - our response to false accusations. It’s as if

Peter summarizes his two main points...and that's what he's doing with the word, "finally." The word here is "telos," which usually means goal or end. Here it's a way of saying, let me summarize what this whole section on submission means both internally in the church and in our witness to the world.

Peter begins with the church's internal integrity in verse 8, "*Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.*" Earlier, Peter spoke to citizens, then slaves, then wives and husbands, and now he's speaking to "all of you." This verse is general, practical advice for the whole Christian community – the church. And that advice is a rehashing of what Jesus and Paul both taught over and over – love one another! Of course, the base is Jesus' teaching, **(LCD)** "**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**" Jesus gave this command while He was in the upper room the night before His crucifixion. Do you remember how Jesus showed His love for His disciples? Yes, **(LCD)** **by washing their feet.** "**Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.**" This is what love one another looks like. Caring for each other. Being willing to take the lowest spot. Taking initiative to do the dishes, pick up the socks, take the notes at the meeting. It's what **(LCD)** **Dave** did for me on our walk a few weeks ago. He didn't know that I took this picture. My knee was bothering me, and I couldn't bend down. Without hesitating, Dave joyfully knelt down and tied my shoe. That's what servants of Jesus do; they act like Jesus.

Peter describes this love for one another through **(LCD)** **five adjectives** that function like imperatives, commands. A few commentators pointed out that Peter arranges them as a chiasm. In a chiasm, there is balanced correspondence between the elements and usually it ends up highlighting the main point in the middle. Peter's main point? Love one another. How? By conforming one's thinking and feeling to the best interests of those around us. Notice that the first and last commands are thinking-oriented: be like-minded, the Greek is literally 'one mind,' and be humble, the Greek is literally 'low mind.' **(LCD)** **If we're going to love one another well, we need unity of purpose, not necessarily uniformity of opinion.** Let me say that again. Having a like-mind means having a unity of purpose, not necessarily a uniformity of opinion. And having a humble or 'low mind,' means valuing others' opinions above your own.

The way we talk about that here at Wintonbury is with a **(LCD)** **target of circles.** The yellow in here are those beliefs that we hold as non-negotiable: basically our statement of faith. We can't budge on these and they define what it means to be a true follower of Jesus. Doctrines like the Trinity, Jesus as fully God and Man - our only Savior, the Bible being the inspired Word of God, etc... We have to agree on these, be uniform. But then there are other issues which Bible-believing Christ-followers differ on. Things like men and women's roles, the use of the miraculous gifts, dress codes, drinking alcohol, etc... We can differ on these issues and still be followers of Jesus. These are secondary issues.

Having a unity of purpose means agreeing on the essentials, the yellows. This is being like-minded. Having these other colors means we don't necessarily have a uniformity of

opinion on everything. That requires being humble, being low-minded. Does that make sense? It's a careful balance and it is essential if we're going to love each other well.

Along with our thinking, Peter says that love for one another also requires **(LCD) common feelings**. The second command is "be sympathetic," literally the Greek is "sympathes," "passion or feeling with others." The fourth command is "be compassionate," the Greek word there means to feel it in your gut, deep inside. Both of these words mean that **(LCD) in order to love one another well, we need to walk in each other's shoes**. Let me say that again: in order to love one another well, we need to walk in each other's shoes. We need to work hard at doing what Peter told the husbands in verse 7, live with your wives in an understanding way. Seek to understand, not judge. Paul put the same principle this way, **(LCD) "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."** This is walking in the shoes of another.

This was the whole point of our race conversation last year. I received an email from one of the participants this week who said that the conversations made her "*more understanding of other people's views.*" That's the point. We weren't trying to make any political statement by having the race conversation. The point was walking in each other's shoes. The point was mourning with those who mourn, not telling them that they shouldn't be mourning. It's feeling their pain in our gut, sharing their feelings. That's what families do. We care for each other...even when we don't agree with each other.

But that's where things go wrong, don't they? A recent article talked about a new phenomenon called the "dones." You may have heard of the "nones," people with no religious affiliation. But now there are "dones," committed Christians who have given up on the church. Why? They came up with **(LCD) 15 reasons**:

- 1. I can get better preaching from a podcast.**
- 2. I can worship on my own.**
- 3. I can study the Bible on my own.**
- 4. I have Christian friends that are my "church."**
- 5. I feel like church is boring**
- 6. I have to work on Sundays.**
- 7. I have family obligations on the weekends.**
- 8. I don't feel like there is a place for my child or teenager.**
- 9. I don't feel like going to church makes a difference in my life.**
- 10. I don't know of any "good" churches near me.**
- 11. I'm not sure I believe the same things anymore.**
- 12. I'm offended by the church's position on sexuality.**
- 13. I don't feel like there is a place for me to lead.**

The ones that really stand out to me are the **(LCD) last two: I've been hurt by church members, and I don't trust church leadership**. I've talked to too many committed believers who feel this way. We're supposed to be a family that cares for each other but instead we clumsily dance like John Stott said – arguing, judging, sinning. I believe we can do better, and it may start with remembering that the church is meant to be a living

organism, not an organization. Policies and procedures are needed, but what should really distinguish us is our love for one another. My discipleship bible study put it this way, **(LCD) “The church is not a human organization that has contracted by common consent to keep alive the memory of a great historical figure. On the contrary, the church is a living organism mystically fused to the living and reigning Christ, who continues to reveal himself in his people.”** Amen.

I saw that last week after our Encouragement Sunday – which was great! But, in my opinion, even better was the informal memorial gathering for **(LCD) Al Biorklund** afterwards. No live stream, no sound system, no agenda. Just open sharing of hearts and minds, thinking and feeling together. It was beautiful. And it revolved around a man who, honestly, wasn't the easiest person in the world to relate to. He had some challenging quirks to say the least! He never held a position at Wintonbury, never led anything, never even really served in any way. But he was HERE! He was part of us. And his very presence impacted us...if we allowed it to.

In a parallel passage to ours, Paul says this, **(LCD) “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”** We leaders tend to pay attention to those who are beneficial to us. We can whisk right by the AI's of the world. Actually, we all can do that. If we're ever going to have the kind of 'love one another' harmony that Jesus, Peter and Paul talked about, it starts with valuing EVERY SINGLE PART of the body – valuing what they think and feel. I've had to repent of this over the years. I've been guilty of overlooking the messy ones, the “unproductive” ones. To my shame, when the idea for the Disability Ministry first came up, I rejected it. I thought we were already doing too much and couldn't take on one more thing. But that's the problem, it's the “productive” people like me who set the priorities. When are the marginalized ever prioritized?! I'm grateful that, Dave persisted and wouldn't take my no for an answer. He was right, I was wrong. Every part of the body matters – EVERY PART! When we get this, and live it out, maybe we'll see the kind of loving community that Peter is encouraging in verse 8. Our first point, **(LCD) Let your love flow by having internal integrity: love one another. A place to start is simply coming to church and thanking God for a family in a hostile world!**

Having encouraged internal integrity, Peter then shifts in verse 9, *“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”* This is very similar to what he said about Jesus in chapter 2, verse 23, *“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”* So we're talking now about opposition from those outside the church. In Peter's day, and in ours, believers suffered greatly for standing faithful for Jesus. And in the face of unjust suffering for the gospel, the command is to imitate Jesus by not giving what you get – not taking revenge. But it's more than that. Even the Old Testament said to not take revenge. But Peter takes it beyond 'don't give what you get,' to 'give what they don't deserve!' He says, “repay evil with blessing.” Why? Because to this you were called – to suffer like and with Jesus. It's part of the package of following Jesus. But there's another part: those who suffer for Him, repay evil with blessing, will inherit a blessing too!

What is this blessing? We don't know for sure, but my guess is that it is something that far outweighs even the worst persecution anyone could imagine. Maybe it's the kind of blessing that motivated Jesus' suffering, **(LCD) "Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God."** There's nothing that motivates me more than wanting to hear my Father say, "Andre, well done my good and faithful son!" Amen!

Peter then quotes a verse from Psalm 34 that supports his point, "*For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. 11 They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.*" Interesting. Just as there were five commands for loving one another, there are **(LCD) five commands** to repay good for evil from outsiders:

1. Keep tongue from evil/lies – speak well of them
2. Turn from evil – don't take revenge
3. Do good – not just avoiding evil
4. Seek peace – try to make it right
5. Pursue it – don't give up easily

Easy to say, but hard to do! So we must look to God and remember who He is; verse 12, "*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*" God is with us in our suffering. He's right there...and He's the one who is ultimately being insulted. And while it is not our place to judge, it is His place, and He will. He is omnipresent – He's there and aware of the injustice. He's omniscient – He knows the truth of the matter. He's omnipotent – He will bring judgment in the proper time. We can trust Him. It's this confidence in God that enabled Stephen to respond with grace and forgiveness in his moment of unjust suffering. After preaching a gospel-soaked, convicting message about Jesus, the Jews responded violently against him, **(LCD) "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."** When he had said this, he fell asleep." This can only come from a deep assurance of God's character. Our second point, **(LCD) Let your love flow by having external integrity: love your enemies. To do that, thank God for who He is and trust His ultimate justice!**

I was privileged to see this lived out recently in our sister Nichole Perreault. She gave me permission to share, that earlier this week, she sent out a tweet about her pro-life story of the negative effects of having an abortion as a young girl and it went viral. Over 20,000 likes. While much of the response has been positive and she's received a lot of love and support, she's also getting all kinds of terrible insults and slanders against her. It's awful! But she's handling it as all faithful believers ought to – with grace and truth with caring believers supporting her in prayer. That's beautiful! May we be great **(LCD) dance partners** with our Lord Jesus such that we radiate a kind of community that loves one another well and then extends that love out into a spiteful but hurting world. Amen.