

Two Marks Of The True Christians.

Text: 1 John 3:13-18

1) The world hates them

Suggested Hymns:

2) They love the brethren

793, 305, 355, 286, 151

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 John 3:13–18, ¹³ *Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.* ¹⁴ *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.* ¹⁵ *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

¹⁶ *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* ¹⁷ *But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?* ¹⁸ *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In this Epistle John addresses the true Christians. He calls them “*my brethren*” and “*my little children.*” There are certain marks by which the Christians can prove their identity, and show before the world that they are the true children of God.

Those people who are but nominal Christians are outward members of the visible Christian Church and not connected with the invisible Christian Church, which is the communion of saints, the congregation of true believers. They are Christians in name only and not in reality and truth.

They generally care very little for the marks which are to be found upon the true Christians, and when they hear a sermon in which they are told that they ought to bear upon themselves these marks, they generally turn a deaf ear to what has been said to them.

They think that they can get along in the world, and be members of the Christian Church in good standing, without making themselves so prominent in the Christian ranks.

But what do the true Christians think as to this matter, those who sincerely mean to be Christians and desire to be the true children of God? They are very anxious to find upon themselves the marks of true, genuine Christianity, and whenever their attention is called to the fact that they are lacking in anything, that any mark of a true Christian is wanting in them, they are glad to hear how to do better, and are willing to heed the Word of God.

Christ mentions some of these marks in the Gospel according to St. John. He says *“If you [continue] in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”*¹ *“My sheep hear my voice.”*² Furthermore *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*³ *“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”*⁴

Such are the marks of the true Christians, and two of them are also mentioned in today’s Epistle. Accordingly, let us consider the *Two Marks Of The True Christians*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Two Marks Of The True Christians The World Hates Them

Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you, says the Apostle. A person is surely not a true Christian if he is so intimate with the world, that is, with unbelievers, that they find nothing to disapprove of in him, that they are perfectly pleased with him, and never get angry and provoked at things which the Christian says or does.

If you are a true follower of Christ, the unbelieving children of this world cannot act otherwise toward you. They will and must hate you. It is true that the Christian must not give the world any just cause to hate him. He must do no wrong to the unbelieving children of this world, so that they have a perfect right to be dissatisfied with his dealings with them, to turn against him in righteous wrath, or to hate him.

Scripture says in 1 Peter 4:15, ¹⁵ *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters.* Christians should

exercise the utmost carefulness in their dealings with the children of this world. They should not hurt and harm them in the body, and not even get angry when they have been wronged.

They should not wrongfully appropriate to themselves the smallest thing that belongs to the neighbour, and not even covet his money and goods. They should not do anything against the neighbour which has the shadow of a wrong. They should not meddle with his private affairs, and not cause trouble by gossiping and telling evil things to bring him in disrepute, but put the best construction on everything.

In short, a true Christian should be so fair-minded, so open-hearted, so honest and upright in his dealings with the children of this world that they cannot but admire him for his sincerity, his honesty, his kindness, and his love.

You would think that the children of this world would seek the friendship of the true Christians then and make friends with them, seeing that nobody in the world treats them more kindly, and is more earnest to enhance their bodily welfare than the Christians?

We should think so, but the reverse is the case. The world hates the true Christians, and this is one of the marks of a true Christian that he bears the hatred and malice of the unbelieving world. ¹³ ***Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you*** says the Apostle. Do not be surprised if the children of this world return evil for good, if they speak all manner of evil against you, despise you, ridicule you, and persecute you in their hatred. What else are you to expect?

You and the world are serving two different masters, and these masters are sternly opposed to each other. You serve Christ, who is the Captain of your salvation, but the world serves the devil, who is the ruler of this world.

All the children of this world, actuated by their master, the devil, are more or less embittered against the Christian faith, and their animosity against Christ is spent upon His true followers whom they hate.

We read in 1 John 2:15–17, ***If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*** ¹⁶ ***For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.***

¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The reason why the world hates you is, because your Christian profession is a standing accusation against the children of this world, a condemnation of their entire way of living and spending their time upon this earth without God and without making any provision for their immortal souls. They hate you because your sentiments differ from theirs, because you refuse to sin and to go into eternal damnation with them.

Do you bear upon yourself this mark of a true Christian, my friends? Does the world hate you, hate you not for a just cause, but for the sake of Christ whom you profess before men in a truly Christian walk and conversation?

Or is the world perfectly pleased with you, because you count yourself with the children of this world when you are in their company, and leave your Christianity at home, and act and speak as the world does?

Remember Christ's words written in Matthew 10:32-33, ³² *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.*

2. Two Marks Of The True Christians They Love The Brethren.

Another mark of a true Christian is mentioned in our text, and that is love to the brethren.

"We love the brethren," that is, our fellow-Christians, those who are of the same household of faith. Now, this does not mean that we are to love none but our fellow-Christians, and that we may exclude from our love the unbelieving children of this world, that we are privileged not to take any notice of them, or even to hate them.

Jesus says to those who desire to be His followers in Matthew 5:44, *love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.* this means that we are to love not only our brethren, but even our enemies, even the children of this world who hate us and persecute us.

The reason why we find so many exhortations in the Bible to love the brethren is, because the Christians do not find their associates, their intimate friends, in the world, but among their fellow-Christians. But as to our relation to those outside of our Christian circle, the Word of God says in Galatians 6:10, *let us do good to all.*

But what is the nature of that love which we are to show forth? The Apostle says, *let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* Love merely in word and in tongue — this is a great deal of what is called love in the world.

Promises are made to help the friend when he gets into distress, but when the time has come to render substantial help, the promises have been forgotten. Some people are very loving in word and in tongue, and can talk very nicely to their friends, especially when they want to have a favour done to them, but when the time has come for them to reciprocate and to do a favour in return, they are nowhere to be found.

“Let us not love in word or in tongue” says the Apostle, *“but in deed and in truth.”* Christians should continually be performing the works of love, feeding the hungry, comforting the afflicted, helping the distressed, like the good Samaritan, and especially they should show their love to God by promoting His kingdom and supporting the church with their earthly means.

And how is such love in deed and in truth a mark of a true Christian? It shows that he has passed from death to life, as the Apostle says, ¹⁴ *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.* ¹⁵ *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

The person who hates the brethren, the Christians, the true children of God, as the world hates Christ's true followers dwells in death. He is still in his natural, unconverted state, with the curse of the Almighty resting upon him because of his sins, and with eternal damnation awaiting him in the hereafter.

Before God he is a murderer, because there is murder in his heart, and as we know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him, so we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. Our love to the brethren is a testimony to the genuineness of our faith, a mark by which we ourselves and

others may know that we are true Christians, inasmuch as it shows that we have passed from death to life.

Such love to the brethren also shows that we appreciate the love of God, and that the love of God dwells in us. The Apostle says, ¹⁶ *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* God laid down His life for us. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep and died on the cross to redeem us all from sin and death and hell.

Now if we appreciate this great and wonderful gift of the Son of God, how do we show it? We show it by our love to the brethren, so that, if it needs be, we even lay down our lives for them. God's love poured out into our hearts cannot but generate love.

John therefore says in 1 John 4:20, ²⁰ *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?* And in our text he says, ¹⁷ *But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?*

My friends, do you bear upon yourself this second mark also of a true Christian? Do you love the brethren? Do you overcome your natural selfishness and find yourself willing to go to trouble and inconvenience and to part with earthly goods that you might relieve those who are in need?

Let us all follow after holiness! Let us pray to God to make us more and more perfect; for of our own power we cannot fill our hearts with true love. God alone can do that, and He wants us to ask Him in prayer.

Let us ask Him to forgive us our shortcomings, our failures, our lovelessness, for the sake of our Saviour's suffering and death, and to replenish our hearts with true love to the brethren, and thus our love will increase, and we shall be the true followers of Jesus Christ who has taught us to love one another. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 8:31

² John 10:27

³ John 13:35

⁴ John 15:14