**Love As A Lifestyle (1 John 3:11-18)**

Through Jesus’ birth, we believers have been invited into the lifestyle of God’s love.

 Greetings to you all, dear brothers and sisters on this fourth Sunday of Advent, as we get ready to celebrate our Savior’s birth according to the American Calendar. Jesus’ birth prepares all of us to have a unique lifestyle. Let’s remember that the angels joyfully announced His birth, and that the Magi worshipped Him, as our dear Lord Jesus, who was God’s greatest expression of Love, entered our human history. Today, therefore, our greatest Joy, the Very-Embodiment of God’s Love who comes and greets us. Looking at the passage in question, the Apostle John, over time, became known as the Apostle of Love. After all, it was he that was resting on Jesus’ heart at the Last Supper in brotherly love. Today we read that love-filled letter (1 John), and we see that fundamental invitation within it that is directed to us, which is to love. Again, I believe the Word of God says to us that through Jesus’ birth, we believers have been invited into the lifestyle of God’s love. Let’s speak, then, about that love-invitation, which was going to become clearer after our Lord’s birth.

 Jesus was born so that we could know and live out God’s love. John says that the message from the beginning was clear: from the start, mankind was called to love. Cain, however, did not do that. He murdered his own brother. He made it very clear whose side he was on through his deed, that he was on Satan’s side. Thank God that we do not belong to that generation anymore! And, because of the latter, we know that the church was facing many pressures. The believers no longer belonged to the world. They had passed from death to life. The proof of it was their love for one another. The opposite of that was the road of death, Cain’s path – not Christ’s. For that reason, Cain’s path, forever colored by his murder, is the path of murder and sin, while Abel’s is the road to life. Paul says that the believers have known Christ’s love, because Jesus sacrificed His life for them, and they are called to the same kind of loving sacrifice for others. That love manifests itself especially when a brother or sister is needy; in other words, the state of where a church member’s heart is (i.e., their internal disposition,) proves whether or not they have Christ’s love within themselves. God loved the world, and He sent Jesus to us for that reason. Jesus also loved us, which is why He was born and He sacrificed Himself for us. That love, however, is to continue today in the church. Jesus was born so that we could know and live out God’s love, after all…

 We all, for love’s sake, though they may live far, will visit our families once in a while. We board planes, drive cars, just to be with them. So, think about this: if we, who are imperfect and short-sighted human beings love each other that much to travel in that way, just imagine how great the distance is between humanity and God. Then, let’s recognize that our Lord Jesus’ birth is the crossing of that great distance for our sakes. Why? Because He wanted to be with us – He wanted to love us with His life. He travelled that distance because it had been a *long* time – since the days of Adam, in fact, that we had not seen Him in Person.

 God loved us so much that He sent us Jesus; Jesus loved us and was born and died for us; the Holy Spirit loved us and came down to live with us until Jesus comes again.

 Today, as we remember His birth, may we make that love practical in our lives. May we never be children of Cain, but rather those of Jesus.

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 Christ was born and revealed! This is great news for you all and for us – not to mention, a great invitation to love! May God’s Love, Who Himself was born in manger, be a reality which causes practical expressions of our faith. May the Lord Bless You all, Amen.