

LOVE AND ORDER

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1 John 4:7-12 (The Voice – Inclusive)

7 My loved ones, let us devote ourselves to loving one another. Love comes straight from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and truly knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

9 Because of this, the love of God is a reality among us: God sent Her only Son into the world so that we could find true life through Him. 10 This is the embodiment of true love: not that we have loved God first, but that He loved us and sent His unique Son on a special mission to become an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 So, my loved ones, if God loved us so sacrificially, surely we should love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God with human eyes; but if we love one another, God truly lives in us. Consequently God's love has accomplished its mission among us.

13 How can we be sure that God truly lives in us and that we truly live in God? By one fact: She has given us Her Spirit. 14 We have watched what God has done, and we stand ready to provide eyewitness testimonies to the reality that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone unites with our confession that Jesus is God's own Son, then God truly lives in that person and that person lives in God. 16 We have experienced and we have entrusted our lives to the love of God in us.

God is love. Anyone who lives faithfully in love also lives faithfully in God, and God lives in him. 17 This love is fulfilled with us, so that on the day of judgment we have confidence based on our identification with Jesus in this world. 18 Love will never invoke fear. Perfect love expels fear, particularly the fear of punishment. The one who fears punishment has not been completed through love.

19 We love because God has first loved us. 20 If someone claims, "I love God," but hates his brother or sister, then he is a liar. Anyone who does not love a brother or sister, whom he has seen, cannot possibly love God, whom he has never seen. 21 God gave us a clear command, that all who love God must also love their brothers and sisters.

The term "law and order" is being thrown around a lot recently, much like a mantra. There is chaos, fear, unrest and pain happening ... and many at the highest levels of leadership are flaming, yelling and repeating, "law and order...law and order."

On social media and in news headlines we're reading...

- tear gas and flash bangs should get them out of the way
- arrest and turn over the agitators
- "I swore an oath to uphold the laws of our nation and that is exactly what I'll do"¹
- Eliminate the zealots and keep the peace

¹ President Trump. *Trump declares himself the 'law and order' president.* www.mercurynews.com 01 June 2020.

- “when the looting starts the shooting starts”¹
- “Without police, there is chaos; without law, there is anarchy; and without safety, there is catastrophe”²
- Law and order must be enforced at all costs
- Strict adherence to the law is a must; right thinking, right understanding and right practice

How do we respond to this?

I think we can all agree that we don’t want lawlessness in our communities. Law-abiding citizenry is something we all want, *at least I think MOST of us want that.*

What do we say about “the chaos?”

What do we do about Law ... Order?

Out of the darkness and chaos, God created order – and it was good! We read this in Genesis only a few weeks ago. Order is good; it’s desirable. The struggle for us is to remember that order is good **when it is of God.** That’s always our challenge. Seeking GOD’S ORDER....instead of ours.

Jesus taught us about engaging the government and leadership, as well as what to do with “law and order” during his ministry. Jesus knew “the law” better than anyone. He didn’t just teach and quote the law – he applied it...unlike any other through his words and actions.

He overturned tables and said, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’ (Matt 21:13)

“Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:7)

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matt 22:21)

“Every person should place themselves under the authority of the government. There isn’t any authority unless it comes from God, and the authorities that are there have been put in place by God.” (Romans 13:1)

His apostles and disciples kept on teaching after his death and resurrection....

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (Romans 10:4 NKJV).

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you also died with respect to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you could be united with someone else. You are united with the one who was raised from the dead so that we can bear fruit for God. When we were self-centered, the sinful passions aroused through the Law were at work in all the parts of our body, so that we bore fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law. We have died with respect to the thing that controlled us, so that we can be slaves in the new life under the Spirit, not in the old life under the written Law.” (Romans 7:4-6)

² Remarks by President Trump at Signing of an Executive Order on Safe Policing for Safe Communities. www.whitehouse.gov. 16 June 2020

“The law code started out as an excellent piece of work. What happened, though, was that sin found a way to pervert the command into a temptation, making a piece of “forbidden fruit” out of it. The law code, instead of being used to guide me, was used to seduce me.” (Romans 7:8)

Jesus, as well as many of his followers, were labeled zealots, heretics, agitators and enemies of the state. Jesus saw how those in power were perverting the laws and implementing an order that most would describe as oppressive and cruel.

There are three basic attitudes toward the law:

- 1) the legalist who fears the law and is in bondage to it.
- 2) The antinomian (anti-law) who hates the law and repudiates it.
- 3) And the law-lover who loves the law and fulfills it.

The law-lover preserves the balance. The law-lover takes “delight in the law of God” (Romans 7:22)...

Law-lovers are happy and “... do not follow the advice of the wicked or take the path that sinners tread or sit in the seat of scoffers, but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night (Psalm 1:1-2)

As the Psalmist says, “Oh, how I love your law!” (Psalm 119:97)

Law-lovers recognize that they can only fulfill the law by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

God and Jesus taught us that LOVE IS THE HIGHEST LAW!

Paul says it like this in Romans, “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ... Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law (verses 8 & 10).

Jesus says that this love we are to have for our brothers and sisters in Christ, is the same kind of sacrificial love he has for us. It’s the love that says, “I’ll endure pain, sorrow, sadness, suffering, and even death

... for my brother and sister in Christ.

... for my LGBTQIA siblings.

... for my black, brown, yellow, red and white siblings.

... for my Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Mormon, Catholic, Atheist and Agnostic siblings.

... for my Republican, Democratic, Libertarian, nationalist, leftist and a-political siblings.

If you remember, Jesus showed and taught about serving one another and forgiving one another when He washed the disciples’ feet, and Jesus said to them, “A servant is not above his Master... if I do this sort of thing, My followers should as well.” And now He’s telling them to love one another just as He loves us.

“From the moment you are born until the moment you die; with every second, every minute, every hour, every day, every month, every year, every decade, and in every moment in between, ...

- God is trying to teach us to love as God loves. And the shape of love is always changing. The shape of love is always expanding. Foolish is the person who thinks that he or she knows what love is at fifteen, or twenty-five or fifty-five or seventy-five, because the shape of God’s love in us is forever expanding and changing in our lives.
- God is teaching you and me to be like God, to be fully the most loving person that God can make of us. That’s what it is all about. If anyone asks you what it is all about, what life is all about, it is about love, learning to love with the love of God.
- ... the purpose of life is God giving you and me the time to learn how to love, as God loves. The purpose of time, of every moment and every day and every year is that God is teaching us what it means to be truly loving people. That’s what it is all about. That is what it has always been about.³

That’s what today’s scripture teaches us and reminds us.

We are BELOVED and we were created to devote ourselves to loving one another. If we LOVE GOD, then the way to prove and demonstrate that is by loving our siblings, without any fear.

The embodiment of true love is that God loved us first, without receiving anything from us and so much so that God sent Jesus – to be an example and a sacrifice.

The law will not pass away, though it is not the means by which we become righteous. It corrects us when we start to think — and we all do at times — that we can do fine on our own. When we sin — and we do — the law brings us back to reality, pointing out the need to repent and return to the free gift of Christ’s righteousness. The law is needed as well because we live in the world. For the sake of our neighbors, we obey the basic rules that help us to live together in civil society. Jesus told us what the heart of the law is: to love God with your whole being and your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37-40). Love your neighbor as you love yourself – NO, do one better – Love your neighbor as Jesus loves you!

As Christians, we are dead to the law as far as its demands and condemnation are concerned, but because we now live in the new way of the Spirit, we love and serve God’s law with a full and joyous heart.

If we want Law and Order, then we already know how to have it – through Love and Order.

In Jesus’ life and faithfulness unto death we see that fulfilled perfectly. So, the law points to Jesus and love as the order for our lives.

Amen

³ Markquart, Edward. *The Life of Christ*. www.sermonsfromseattle.com.