



# Around the Word BIBLE STUDY

Trinity, 2016

# 1 John 3:16-24

## St. Augustine on Uprooting the Thorns of the Heart:

"I suppose the thing is now made manifest to you, my bretheren: this great and most concerning secret and mystery. What is the force of charity, all Scripture doth set forth; but I know not whether anywhere it be more largely set forth than in this Epistle. We pray you and beseech you in the Lord, that both what ye have heard ye will keep in memory, and to that which is yet to be said, until the epistle is finished, will come with earnestness, and with earnestness hear the same. But open ye your heart for the good seed: root out the thorns, that which we are sowing in you be not choked, but rather that the harvest may grow, and that the Husbandman may rejoice and make ready the barn for you as for grain, not the fire as for the chaff."

(Homily 5 on 1 John)

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**Introduction:** In this text, we further delve into what love is and what it means to have and show love to others. John also speaks in this section about having confidence before God, a confidence that comes to us through the grace of God who gives us the Holy Spirit and faith through the waters of Holy Baptism.

### Opening: Psalm 116:1-9

<sup>1</sup>I love the LORD, because | he has heard\*  
my voice and my pleas for | mercy.

<sup>2</sup>**Because he inclined his | ear to me,\*  
therefore I will call on him as long | as I  
live.**

<sup>3</sup>The snares of death encompassed me;  
the pangs of Sheol laid | hold on me,\*  
I suffered distress and | anguish.

<sup>4</sup>**Then I called on the name | of the LORD:\*  
"O LORD, I pray, deliv- | er my soul!"**

<sup>5</sup>Gracious is the LORD, and | righteous,\*  
our God is | merciful.

<sup>6</sup>**The LORD preserves the | simple;\*  
when I was brought low, he | saved me.**

<sup>7</sup>Return, O my soul, | to your rest,\*  
for the LORD has dealt bountifully | with  
you.

<sup>8</sup>**For you have delivered my | soul from  
death,\*  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from | stumbling;**

<sup>9</sup>I will walk be- | fore the LORD\*  
in the land of the | living.

<sup>10</sup>**I believed, even | when I spoke,\*  
"I am greatly af- | flicted";**

<sup>11</sup>I said in | my alarm,\*  
"All mankind are | liars."

<sup>12</sup>**What shall I render | to the LORD\*  
for all his bene- | fits to me?**

<sup>13</sup>I will lift up the cup of sal- | vation\*  
and call on the name | of the LORD,

<sup>14</sup>**I will pay my vows | to the LORD\*  
in the presence of all his | people.**

<sup>15</sup>Precious in the sight | of the LORD\*  
is the death | of his saints.

<sup>16</sup>**O LORD, I am your | servant;\*  
I am your servant, the son of your  
maidservant.**

**You have | loosed my bonds.**

<sup>17</sup>I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanks- |  
giving\*

and call on the name | of the LORD.

<sup>18</sup>**I will pay my vows | to the LORD\*  
in the presence of all his | people,**

<sup>19</sup>in the courts of the house | of the LORD,\*  
in your midst, O Jerusalem. |

Praise the LORD!

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\*  
and to the Holy | Spirit;  
as it was in the be- | ginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

<sup>16</sup>**By this we know love, that he laid down  
his life for us, and we ought to lay down our  
lives for the brothers.**

Look back to 1 John 3:15. What is the contrast between these two verses? Give special attention to who the focus is of each verse.

Read John 15:12-14. Where does John get this definition of love that he teaches in his Epistle? Does Jesus himself speak about how we ought to act in light of his work for us?

Who is our example of what love actually is? Is love then simply a feeling, or is it an action?

<sup>17</sup>**But if anyone has the world's goods and  
sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart  
against him, how does God's love abide in  
him? <sup>18</sup>Little children, let us not love in word  
or talk but in deed and in truth.**

How does what John is saying here compare to James 1:22 and 2:14-17?

What happens to the Church when we actually love one another? Read Ephesians 4:15-16.

John's use of brother here refers to fellow believers. Is it always easy to love the other people in your congregation? What are we called to do in spite of how we may feel sometimes?

Notice that this exhortation to do good comes to us only after we are reminded of who is the very model of love. Our good works do not flow from our desire or ability to make ourselves righteous, but they flow out of our desire to show and live our faith before our neighbor and for our neighbor's benefit.

**<sup>19</sup> By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; <sup>20</sup> for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.**

Some have taken verses 19 and 20 to be condemning, that God knows even more than our hearts, and we should fear his judgment. Do you think this is what John is saying?

Read Jeremiah 17:7-10. Can we trust our hearts? Where should we put our trust?

Read Jeremiah 31:33. Where has God put the Law?

In John 8:34-36, what does God say about us?

Do we as Christians need to fear God's condemnation? Read Romans 8:1

**<sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; <sup>22</sup> and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.**

Who is the high priest in Hebrews 4:14-16 that gives us the confidence to stand before the Father?

In Ephesians 3:11-12, what does Paul say gives us boldness and confidence?

According to Paul in 1 Timothy 1:5, where does the love that we are to exhibit come from?

The accusations and condemnation of the Law working in our hearts is silenced through the Gospel of Jesus.

Does John's teaching about prayer reflect what Jesus says in Matthew 7:7?

If we pray for something that isn't answered immediately in the way that we wanted it, does it mean that God has rejected us?

Look up James 4:3 to see a reason why prayer may not be

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answered as we want.

**<sup>23</sup> And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.**

Read John 8:28-29. If Jesus does things that are pleasing to the Father, what do we do that's pleasing to Jesus?

Read John 6:28-29. What does Jesus say is the thing that's pleasing to God?



What role does the Holy Spirit play in our believing? Look at Ephesians 1:13-14 and Acts 2:38. Based on what you've just read, is the faith that God demands something that he himself gives us, or do we have to go find it?

**<sup>24</sup> Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.**

How does Jesus say we can be sure we abide in him in John 6:53-56?

What does Jesus promise about being with us in John 14:18-24.

If we each abide in Christ, what does this say about our relationship with one another? Read John 17:20-21. Do you think that this should influence how and why we would seek to love our brothers?

Read Romans 8:9. Can we be sure that the Holy Spirit dwells in us? Refer back to Acts 2:38.

Should our confidence before God be based on our emotions, things inside of ourselves, and our works, or on what God has done for us?

**Closing Hymn: The Gifts Christ Freely Gives (LSB, 602)**

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