

**No Love? Know Death!
Know Love! No Death!**

1 John 3:13-16

Our text for meditation is from John's first Epistle as read earlier.

We pray Luther's Prayer before the sermon: Eternal God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, give us Your Holy Spirit who writes the preached Word into our hearts. May we receive and believe it and be cheered and comforted by it in eternity. Glorify Your Word in our hearts and make it so bright and warm that we may find pleasure in it, through Your Holy Spirit think what is right, and by Your power, fulfill the Word, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

How many different ways can you spell no/know? I **know** that sounds like a strange question. But you really have **no** way of telling to which word I am referring, unless I define it? In a spelling bee you'd probably ask me to use it in a sentence.

So, look at the bulletin and note the sermon title, No Love? Know Death! Know Love! No death! There are two different spelling of what you hear as the word no/know. They are words that sound the same, but, as you can see, they are very different in meaning.

Our text sort of says the same thing; "Whoever does not love, abides in death." That is a very succinct summary of the entire Law of God. We are commanded by God to: love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength; and to love our neighbor as ourself. That is a tall order. It is also a command of which we fall far short.

Want proof? Look around at the pews today. There are people that you know are members of this congregation who are not here. If they loved God, they'd hold the preaching of His Word and the receiving of His sacrament sacred, they'd gladly be here where God comes to us in Christ Jesus.

Ask yourselves if you love God with all your heart, mind, and strength. Ask yourselves what you do when your income increases, or if you got an income tax refund, is your first thought, "what percentage will I give to God and the building up of His kingdom?" I know that sometimes my first thought needs me praying for God's forgiveness.

What about our neighbors? Do we really love them? Our text says it quite plainly, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

The inability to forgive is the same as saying that Christ's death for their sin isn't payment enough. In fact, Christ Himself says, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." (Matt. 6:14-15) He says you are to be reconciled to your brother before coming to the altar and offering your gift. Unwillingness to forgive, unwillingness to be reconciled, is an unwillingness to love. When we treat others like this, it is really the same as having the desire that they go to hell – it is a desire that they perish eternally.

Jesus took these homophones, no/know to a new level. He came to know death, becoming intimately acquainted with death on the cross. He knew death because He does more than know love, but is Himself love incarnate. In His great love for you, for me, for all mankind, that He knew death so intimately, so that we might have no death.

It is this love of God in which we are to abide. We are to know His love intimately through the hearing of His word and the receiving of His body and blood in the Blessed Sacrament. These are the gracious means God has instituted to bestow upon us His love, and to remove from us the knowledge and fear of death. Even more, these gifts take death away from us.

When we have **no** love, when we refuse to immerse ourselves in the love of God in Christ Jesus – when we ignore the absolution by which His love for us cleanses us of our sin, we will come **know** death eternal. When we forget the love of God, given in baptism, we abide in death. When we neglect Christ's love, given to us in His body and blood for us Christians to eat and to drink in the Lord's Supper, we are embracing death.

God's great desire is to give to us His love in Christ Jesus. He **LOVES** to give forgiveness and life to us. When we act like those in the Gospel lesson who had other things to do and refused the invitation to receive His gifts of love, we are despising God's gifts.

But God does not relent. God knows of our sin and of our death. He wants us to know His love and grant to us His life. We have knowledge of Christ's work for you. We know He was born of a virgin and lived a perfect life that He lovingly sacrificed unto death to pay for your sin. We know that He rose again on the third day, proclaiming the victory over sin and death, won. We know that He ascended into heaven and there pleads our case before the Father. But head knowledge isn't all there is.

Dearly beloved of God, it is by His grace that God wants to save you, by His undeserved gift to you. His grace comes to you by means of incredibly marvelous gifts to you. These gifts bestow upon you the love of God in Christ Jesus, and work faith in you to trust the benefits of His perfect life and His innocent suffering and death. **Know** that you are forgiven, that God's love gives to you eternal life, and His love grants salvation.

Now is the time to take those homophones and switch them. Write them in your hearts and minds. When you, by faith, know (K-N-O-W) love, God's love for you in Christ Jesus, there is no (N-O) death.

Dearly beloved of God, **know** love – by faith trust it. Love absolves your sins for those times when your love for God faltered and failed, and for those times you loved yourself more than your neighbor.

Know love, for baptismal waters cover you, removing sin and death. In your daily contrition and repentance, your baptismal waters are renewed in the love of God for you, keeping you free from sin and granting you life eternal, so you have **no** death.

Today, **know** love again. Come to the table. Eat and drink of the love of God in Christ Jesus, His body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sin. For when you **know** love, there is **no** death for you in Christ Jesus. Amen.