PREACHING & TEACHING

Sermon on Love

Preaching notes on love: three passages with what each one costs you, the problem that English has one word where the New Testament has four, and the trap that turns every love sermon into a description of a feeling nobody can produce on demand.

topic notes · 4 segments

Topic notes, not a full sermon. Take the structure from the sermon outline page and the material from here.

BEFORE YOU RECORD

- Love is the hardest common topic to preach because the congregation thinks it already knows what you are going to say by the end of your first sentence. Whatever you do, the second minute must contain something they did not expect.
- Avoid the four Greek words as a sermon structure. It is the most preached outline on this subject and congregations recognise it instantly. Use the distinction, do not build on it.

01. Three texts, three costs

choose one

[each one makes a different sermon - do not take all three]

1 John 4:7-21. The strongest text and the hardest to keep concrete. Its claim is that love is not something God does but something God is, which is enormous and slides into abstraction within three minutes unless you anchor every paragraph in something physical.

1 Corinthians 13. Everybody knows it and almost nobody knows it was written to a church tearing itself apart over spiritual status. Preached with its context restored it stops being a wedding reading and becomes a rebuke, which is far more interesting.

John 15:12-17. Narrow and concrete: lay down your life for your friends, said by someone about to do it that week. Costs you breadth and buys you weight.

02. The one-word problem

the useful distinction

[use it, do not structure the sermon on it]

English asks one word to carry what a person feels about their spouse, their children, their friends and their football team. Greek spread that load across several. Which means the congregation hears a word that is mostly about feeling, and the text usually means something mostly about commitment.

That gap is the sermon. Say it once, in a sentence, and then spend the rest of the time on what commitment looks like on a Tuesday.

03. The tension worth naming

the honest bit

[every congregation has someone for whom this is not theoretical]

Being told to love is useless to someone who is trying and failing to feel it about a particular person. That is the situation most people are actually in when they hear this sermon, and it is the one most love sermons never address.

If love is something you do rather than something you generate, then a person who acts well towards someone they cannot stand is not a hypocrite. They are doing the thing. Say that plainly and watch the room.

04. An angle that is not the obvious one

if you want it

[for a congregation that has heard the standard version many times]

1 John says we love because he first loved us. The order is the claim. Most of our trying runs the other way round, attempting to generate enough love to deserve being loved, and 1 John says that sequence is impossible and unnecessary.

USAGE

Free to use. Preach it, adapt it, record it, publish under your own name. No credit required.

Record it with Hilite — hellohilite.com

Studio-quality audio from your laptop mic. Free to start.