

Sermon followed by Service

April 28, 2024

1 Joh

I love pizza; I love Lisa - hopefully not in the same way. I love mountains; I love my family - hopefully not in the same way. I love my house; I love God's house - hopefully not in the same way. I love the world; I love God - hopefully not in the same way.

We love. We declare love. We make love. Even more so, we need love, we crave love. We twist love; we distort love. We love, and sometimes we don't.

In our lesson, John is writing to people who seem to be mixed up, messed up, missing out on love - what love is and what love can do. Thankfully, John doesn't pre-sing Tina Turner or Meatloaf or even Taylor Swift. Instead, John shows us God's love.

Bible Class Conversation Starter - Together create a list of the best love songs.

For God, love isn't just a feeling, a craving, a desire. Love isn't just a feeling, a fondness or affection, a friendliness or friendship. For God, love isn't based on shared interests - "we like the same things." Love isn't based on shared satisfaction - "I like what he or she does for me." For God, love is something more.

I could try to put it into words. When God puts his love into words, what does love say? "Dearly beloved. Peace. I forgive you. I'm here for you. I've got you forever. Walk with me. Work with me. [and through it all] With you I am well-pleased!"

What is your favorite way that God puts his love into words?

But for God, love is more than words. For God, love is a determination, a commitment to sacrifice self - to sacrifice comfort and convenience, to sacrifice power and pride, to give of himself, to sacrifice himself - to meet your needs, for you. For God, love is more than words. **“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.”** For God, love isn’t just some feeling, some thought, some words. For God, love takes action. John says more: **“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”** For God, love isn’t cheap; he sacrificed his one and only Son for us - for you and me and the whole world out there. That’s right, for God, love isn’t just for the innocent, the deserving, the cute, the victim; for God, love is for the sinner - for people ugly with sin, broken with sin, for people deserving to be damned. How can that be? For God, love is about Jesus - Jesus for you and Jesus for me and Jesus for that world out there so that with Jesus we can have life filled with love the way it’s supposed to be ... so we can share love the way it’s supposed to be.

Listen to how John bookends what he says about God’s love. On the front end: **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”** On the back end: **“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”** God doesn’t give us a one-way love; God doesn’t give us a dead-end love, a plugged up love. No, God gives us a love to soak in and share.

What happens to people who live as if the love they receive is a one-way love, a dead-end love?

What happens to congregations who live as if the love they receive is a one-way love, a dead-end love?

In this section, whom is John encouraging us to love?

Not just a love for pizza and mountains; not just a love for family. To love pizza and mountains is a great gift from God; to love family is an even greater gift from God. But that's not the love John is talking about here. Let's dig into that a bit deeper. People use what John says here to say things John doesn't say. John says: "**Love comes from God**" and "**everyone who loves has been born of God.**" Some people use those words to legitimize whatever they think of as love. But loving pizza and mountains doesn't make me born of God. Loving my family doesn't make me born of God. Calling my lust love doesn't make it love. Calling my cravings and urges love doesn't make them love. Calling my selfish self-centeredness love doesn't make it love. Calling my obsession and slavery to my feelings love doesn't make it love. And calling my lust, cravings, urges, self-centeredness, and obsession with my feelings love, doesn't mean that my lust, cravings, urges, self-centeredness, and obsession with my feelings are from God. Just because I call something love doesn't mean that it is love or that it comes from God or that it makes me born of God.

The safer question - what do you see people calling love that really isn't love?

The more dangerous question - What do you call love that really isn't love?

When John says love comes from God - this doesn't show up in our English translations - John is talking about the same kind of love that God has for us - a love for the people of God. Not just feelings - or friendly feelings, or possessive feelings - for the people of God, but a love determined to sacrifice self for the people of God. That's the love God has for you, and that's the love God is working in you.

And that love is blessed, wonderfully blessed! As we live in love, as we love with God's love, we have the joy, the peace, the satisfaction, the fulfillment that we fit in. Not that we fit in with the world, but that we fit in with God. As we live in God's kind of love, we get to know (not just up here), we get to experience with our whole being that we are living and loving with God - with God in us and us in God. As we live in God's love, we are working God's love, showing each other and the world God's love. And even if the world doesn't cheer us on, we have the angels cheering and God smiling - "Well done, good and faithful servant. You are my son, my daughter, my dear child whom I love. With you I am well pleased!"

What does it mean for you that as you love with God's love you fit in with God?

As you hear God's love for you, do you feel fear? That's another thing God's love does for us - it drives out fear. As we live in God's love, as we love with God's love we know that we fit in with God - and love drives out fear. That's good for us, but what do we

know? We live in a world with so many people around us filled with anxiety, worry, and fear. What might we sometimes want to say? “Stop it. Get over it.” Doesn’t help, does it? God’s love is what does help. As we live in God’s love, as we love the anxious, the worrying, the fearful with God’s love, love drives out fear. Not with the snap of a finger, but by surrounding the anxious heart with God’s love, setting the anxious heart up to find rest in Jesus.

How does love drive out your fear?

What gets in the way of love driving out your fear?

And that sounds so good, except what? I don’t love like God. I let self get in the way of God’s love. I let my pride, my insecurities, my comfort and convenience, my busyness and my tiredness, my headaches and my grumpiness get in the way of God’s love. I let the world out there get in the way of God’s love. Oh, we could make that list go longer, couldn’t we?

What gets in the way of you loving like God?

What do you let get in the way of you loving like God?

So how can we love like God? **“We love because he first loved us.” “Love comes from God.” “Everyone who loves has been born of God.”** We are not the sum of our weakness and brokenness; we are not the sum of our struggles and failures; we are not our sin and guilt. We are not our self, our old self, our natural self. And we are not what the world “makes” us to be. We are born of God,

loved by God, forgiven and set right by God, forgiven and set free by God. We aren't alone in the world, but we are in God with God in us. What does that mean for us? Victory! Not just to win and walk around like winners, but to love. **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.”** Amen.

What does it mean to you to be “forgiven and set free” by God?

What does it mean to you to have God living in you?

What does it mean to be living in God?

John doesn't give many specific applications for how to “love one another.” What are some applications he does give?

- *1 John 2:15-17 –*
- *1 John 3:16-18 –*
- *1 John 5:2 –*
- *1 John 5:16-18-*

What are some ways that we - as a congregation - can better “love one another”?

What are some ways that we - as individuals - can better “love one another”?

What are some ways that you - as an individual - can better “love one another”?

April 27 & 28, 2024

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are surrounded by love - broken love, confused love, mixed-up and messed up love - leaving hearts empty and broken.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... our compassionate and gracious Father shows us what true love does - and calls us to follow!

OPENING HYMN

"Son of God, Eternal Savior"

Hymn 729

Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us, hallows all our human race,
you our head, who, throned in glory, for your own will ever plead:
fill us with your love and pity, heal our wrongs and help our need.

Bind us all as one together in your Church's sacred fold,
weak and healthy, poor and wealthy, sad and joyful, young and old.
Is there want or pain or sorrow? Make us all the burden share.
Are there spirits crushed and broken? Teach us, Lord, to soothe their care.

As you, Lord, have lived for others, so may we for others live.
Freely have your gifts been granted; freely may your servants give.
Yours the gold and yours the silver, yours the wealth of land and sea;
we but stewards of your bounty held in solemn trust will be.

Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us hallows all our human race,
by your praying, by your willing that your people should be one,
grant, O grant our hope's fruition: here on earth your will be done.

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you are the giver of everything good. Inspire us, your humble servants, to long for what is right and, through your gracious guidance, accomplish it to your glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST LESSON

1 John 4:7-16a (EHV)

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love has not known God, because God is love. This is how God's love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another.

No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love has been brought to its goal in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. We also have come to know and trust the love that God has for us.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 89A

Refrain



For - ev - er I will sing the good - ness of the



LORD, the good - ness of the LORD.

Tone



I will sing of the LORD's great love for- / ever;
 with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
 through all gener- / ations.
 I will declare that your love stands firm for- / ever,
 that you have established your faithfulness in / heav'n itself.
 The heavens praise your / wonders, LORD,
 your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the / holy ones. *Refrain*

Who is like you, LORD God Al- / mighty?
 You, LORD, are mighty, and your faithfulness sur- / rounds you.
 Blessed are those who have learned to ac- / claim you,
 who walk in the light of your / presence, LORD.
 They rejoice in your name / all day long;
 they celebrate your / righteousness.
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. *Refrain*

SECOND LESSON

1 John 4:16b-21 (EHV)

God is love. Whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. In this way his love has been brought to its goal among us, so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are just like Jesus. There is no fear in love, but complete love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who continues to be afraid has not been brought to the goal in love.

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, love God, whom he has not seen? This then is the command we have from him: The one who loves God should also love his brother.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

1 John 3:1

Alleluia. See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! Alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 15:9–17

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

"In Unity and Peace"

Hymn 732

Refrain

How good it is and how pleasant to live in unity and peace.
How good it is and how pleasant to live together in one Lord.
(Last time only)
to live together in one Lord.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, agree in ev'rything you say.
May there be no divisions among you, but be united in one mind.
For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all. *Refrain*

Live a life that is worthy of your call, be humble, gentle, and patient.
Bear with each other in ways that are loving, preserve the unity of faith.
For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all. *Refrain*

Share the love that has joined us as one, unite in spirit and ideals.
Never be rivals, do not be conceited, but look to others in their need.
For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all. *Refrain*

SERMON

HYMN

“Oh, How Good It Is”
Hymn 731

Oh, how good it is when the fam’ly of God
dwells together in spirit, in faith and unity.
Where the bonds of peace, of acceptance and love
are the fruits of his presence here among us.

Refrain

So with one voice we’ll sing to the Lord,
and with one heart we’ll live out his word,
till the whole earth sees the Redeemer has come,
for he dwells in the presence of his people.

Oh, how good it is on this journey we share
to rejoice with the happy and weep with those who mourn.
For the weak find strength, the afflicted find grace
when we offer the blessing of belonging. *Refrain*

Oh, how good it is to embrace his command
to prefer one another, forgive as he forgives.
When we live as one we all share in the love
of the Son with the Father and the Spirit. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you love your whole creation and forget none of your creatures. We bring you our supplications for all your children, for all those we love and all those committed to your care:

C: **We implore you to hear us, O God.**

M: For all who have blessed us with kindness, led us with patience, and restored and refreshed us by their sympathy and help:

C: **We implore you to hear us, O God.**

M: For all who have wished or done us ill, that you would turn their hearts to penitence and ours to blessing:

C: Lord, have mercy.

M: For all prisoners and captives and all who suffer from oppression, that you would lead them to know the perfect freedom of your Son's forgiveness, relieve their suffering, and move us to imitate you by assisting them with works of mercy and compassion:

C: Lord, have mercy.

M: For all who bear the cross of suffering, who are sick in body or in mind:

C: Be merciful and spare them, good Lord.

M: For all who are troubled by the suffering or sin of those they love:

C: Lord, hear our prayer.

M: For all who have experienced worldly loss, that in the midst of darkness and confusion they may find their peace in you:

C: We implore you to hear us, O God.

M: For all who are absorbed in their own grief, that they may be raised to share the sorrows of their brothers and sisters and to know and appreciate the fellowship of those who bear Christ's cross:

C: We implore you to hear us, O God.

M: For all who are suffering because of their faithfulness to conviction and duty, that in sacrifice they might find strength and joy; and that you, who see in secret, may uphold them by your grace, so they may at last come to an open reward:

C: Lord, have mercy.

M: For all who are undergoing temptations of the flesh or who imagine evil in their hearts, that you would enable them to overcome and obtain the victory through Christ:

C: Be merciful and spare them, good Lord.

M: For all who are lonely and sad in the midst of the joys of others, that they may know you as their Father, Friend, and Comforter:

C: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

M: For the infirm, the aged, and all who are approaching death, that they may find their strength in you and obtain a blessed end:

C: **Lord, hear our prayer.**

M: For all for whom we have forgotten to pray but who are dear to you:

C: **Assist them according to their needs, and bring them to your heavenly kingdom, through Christ our Lord.**

M: O God our Father, hear our intercessions, answer them according to your will, and make us the channels of your infinite pity and helpfulness. Join our prayers with those of all your faithful people as we pray as our master has taught us:

C: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill"

Hymn 697

May we your precepts, Lord, fulfill and do on earth our Father's will
as angels do above; still walk in Christ, the living way,
with all your children, and obey the law of Christian love.

So may we join your name to bless, your grace adore, your pow'r confess,
to flee from sin and strife. One is our calling, one our name,
the end of all our hopes the same: a glorious crown of life.

Spirit of life, of love, and peace, unite our hearts, our joy increase,
your gracious help supply. To each of us the blessing give
in Christian fellowship to live, in joyful hope to die.

OFFERING

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Why Should We Sign?

We love each other, and so we've promised to watch out for each other. At each baptism we promise that we'll watch out for each other. When we joined and became part of the St. John family, we asked that we be included in watching out for each other. As people who love each other and are watching out for each other, we want to know who needs help sticking close with Jesus. As people who love each other, we want to make it easy for our family to watch out for us. The friendship pads help us to do that.

We love each other. And we love Christ's ministry among us. That's why we want to make it easy for Jesus to do his work among us. And since Jesus does his watching, warning, and encouraging through pastors, elders, visitors, congregation brothers and sisters - who don't have the eyes or memory of Jesus - we want to make it easy for his people to do his work. Therefore, since we love each other and we love the work of Jesus, we want to work together to help Jesus' work get done, right? The friendship pads help us to do that.

What Happens with the Friendship Pads?

We check each week for visitors and special notes. We record when people come to worship and the Lord's Supper. And when we notice people may be missing more, we work to shepherd Jesus' flock. Why? Because we love each other.

But ...

"I don't want people watching out for me. I'm fine on my own."

Jesus' plan for his church doesn't include that option.

"You should just know who's coming and who isn't."

Thankfully, God doesn't have that same expectation of me. Instead of giving his church little gods (with perfect eyes and perfect memories) to pastor his people, he likes the idea of his people helping each other and working together in his church. And so we ask that you help us.

How Can I Help? Please print the names of all teens and adults who are with us in worship and at the supper.