



Guess what the main idea of the sermon today is? **Love one another.**

But, what is love? In the same conversation with someone, you could hear them say they love their wife, they love sports, they love pizza, and they love their church. Oh, and they love God, too. What does love mean? If you look up the current definition, it's "an intense feeling of deep affection." So, love is simply when you have intense feelings of being drawn to someone or something? That definition seems to only confuse things. What if there are struggles in a relationship with your children and you don't have feelings of affection towards them after they've worn you out with their consistent obedience? What if there's a struggle with a close friend or family member and they've tested your feelings of affection? Do you say, "Sorry, child, the feelings are gone. I don't love you"?

The struggle to define love is an age-old struggle. Think back to the struggles of the Christians John is writing to. They thought they were unified with people who agreed on Jesus. For a time, maybe they were friends. They trusted each other. Then, people diverged from Jesus, but they communicated like they were the faithful ones. They weren't denying anything essential. Instead, these others were coming off as though they're trying to get the Christians to grow and know God better. They were "helping" them. But the Christians knew something wasn't right. They remained faithful to the original message they heard, but as a result, these friends left.

Have you ever had situations where you're left wondering if you are right or wrong? People you cared about broke the relationship. Were they wrong? Are you wrong? Of course, in this letter from John, he clearly states that the letter's recipients were faithful to Jesus (even though they were confused). But John doesn't only want to tell them how they're right and the others are wrong. He's trying to help them as they move forward as a church.

You know, when you are hurt in a church context (or any context, for that matter), we tend to put up protective walls around us so that we don't get hurt again. That's understandable, and in a crisis, that can actually be good. But if we keep those walls up, we'll never heal. We won't experience the freedom that God has actually designed for us. Many of us, myself included, have been hurt by people in the church (whether church leadership or fellow church members). We have our stories. And whenever we go through these situations, we eventually think, "What's next?" Or, "How am I supposed to respond now?" Am I going to engage with this church family and persevere? Or, is it so significant that I need to choose between another church family or remain distant and do my own thing? John's answer to us in the midst of all of these decisions is to grow in love. By the way, as somewhat of a side note, John doesn't call the Christians to pursue the faction that's unfaithful to the Lord. Instead, he calls them to love one another. But that may not sound encouraging to you. You think, "Great, a new group of people, but what if we get hurt again by them? What if there's more heresy to come?" That doesn't change the call to love.

In actuality, love means there will be a potential of hurt. This, by the way, doesn't mean we pursue abusive relationships. But instead, I'm saying this to emphasize that all relationships in a fallen world have pain come alongside of them. Paul said of Corinth that the more he loved them, the less he was loved by them. Jesus said of his own disciples, "How long must I endure with you?" I'm reminded of the popular quote from C.S. Lewis about love: **To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.**

Do you see how relatable this text is to our day and age? And so maybe now you're thinking, "Ok, I'm supposed to love, but what does love mean?" Is it just an intense affectionate feeling? Well, we learned in 1 John 3:1 that the kind of love God has, according to John, is an out-of-this world kind of love. It's supernatural. It's beyond our full comprehension. If that's what love is, then how can we love like him? If you've been hurt by professing Christians, you will get why John here gives us reasons *why* we ought to love one another. I don't believe the first-century recipients of this letter had their arms folded saying, "I won't love," but instead, they need to be reminded of the motivation to continue in love and not to build the walls and lock their hearts in a coffin. So, we're going to take many weeks talking about love and what that looks like in a local church context. Today, we're simply focusing on *why* we ought to love one another.

But let me add one more thought before diving further in these four verses today. The command is "love one another." The phrase "one another" refers to the others with whom you are one. They are no longer one with the false prophets. They are one with the ones who share commonality around God's glory in Jesus. When you read the "one another" passages in the New Testament, I'm fairly certain most often that phrase is used to refer to the local church context. Who comprises the local church? As we read the various New Testament letters, we see that the churches are comprised of men and women, rich and poor, young and old, Jew and Gentile. And these one another statements are a call for us to love all. Practically speaking that means for us, in a church with men and women, I am given the privilege to call you all my brothers and sisters, and I should love my sisters and my brothers. We should relate with everyone – not just let men get together with men and women with women. Or, if there are wealthier people here, you don't just hang out with those in the same socio-economic status, but with anyone. To love one another means that we are devoted to show love to all the different types. This, by the way, adds to the difficulty, right? We feel safety with people who are the same, but the Scriptuers emphasis is that our unity is around God's glory in Jesus. Keep that focus! There will be more practical ramifications on this in the weeks to come, but I simply wanted to ensure we understood that the "one another" phrase encompasses *all* types of people and that we are called as individuals to relate with all the different types of individuals.

Now, let's move on to *why* love. The first reason is

### 1. God is the source (vv. 7-8).

Verse 7 starts with, "7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. . ."<sup>1</sup> Again, notice how John starts this sentence with "Beloved." He's not calling them to anything he himself doesn't practice. He

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 4:7.

loves them. Again, I want to stop with this word. Do you have people in your life who surprise you with how much they love and care about you? I have had multiple people like that. One who has surprised me in recent years is Thad Barnum, the man who spoke at our men's conference a couple months ago. He speaks to me as though he genuinely loves *me* as I am, and he enjoys me. He listens to my hurts and sympathizes with me, and he also rejoices in my joy. He's intent to care. He helps me to define love, and he would be like a "John" figure to me. I could hear Thad speaking these kinds of words to me. Do you have someone like that? If not, I encourage you to pray for someone like that. Open your heart to someone even in our own church family. But when you experience it, you want to share that kind of love to others. So, John's an encouragement and even example to the Christians. He dearly loves them.

He tells them that they all ought to love one another – the others with whom they are one (i.e. – fellow Christians). Why? For love is from God. The "for" can be translated "because." What does it mean that love is *from* God? Well, we've seen in the previous verses that people are from the world or people are from the Spirit. That means that the source of their meaning and purpose is from that thing. Love's source and meaning is from God.

If you have a view of God that diminishes love, you have an incorrect view of him. I've heard friends of mine who have viewed God the Father as a mean, despotic Being – misinterpreting the Old Testament. But the Bible says that if you've seen Jesus, you've seen the Father. What was Jesus like? That's the Father! Love comes from God! He's the source. What amazing truth.

As a result, John continues in verse 7 by saying, ". . .and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."<sup>2</sup> Why this "and" here? Isn't it sufficient enough to say that we should love because love is from God? Why add that whoever loves has been born of God and knows him?

Let's think of it in another way. It might take a moment to click, but just go with me on this. Have you ever had a situation when you're in your house and you can't find a charger. You don't say, "Well, that's ok. Electricity exists! I'll just hold up my phone and it'll be charged." No. You need something that links you to the source of electricity. You need a charger. What's the source? We could say electric company, but I'm making this illustration more simple. The source is the outlet. The charger is the means of transferring the electricity to the phone, and then the phone being charged is the result. What does this have to do with John's logic here? Well, the source of love is God. Our faith in Jesus is the charger. Meaning, if you have turned from your sins and trusted Jesus as your Savior and King, you are connected to God. Like a charger connected to the phone and the source must then charge the phone, so it is with us. If we are connected to Jesus, God's love *will* pour into us and through us to others.

Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. These two phrases are beautifully important. To be born of God refers to being born again. In John 1:12-13, we read, "<sup>12</sup>**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,** <sup>13</sup>**who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**"<sup>3</sup>

To believe in Jesus' name is to receive him. Meaning, you embrace Jesus as all that he is. To "believe in his name" is actually a unique Greek construct that's only used in the Bible (as far as we know) and it refers to being taken outside of yourself and to depend completely on Jesus. You don't depend on you for life and salvation and affirmation before God. You depend on Jesus alone. If you have received and

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 4:7.

<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 1:12–13.

believed in him, you not only are forgiven of your sins and given eternal life. You become part of God's family. You are born *into* his family! It's new life! Your Father is now the One who is the source of love – God himself. Therefore, he's not an aloof god. He's not distant. Instead, he's relational. That's why John says "knows God." If you genuinely know God, you will love. You can't *not* be affected by God. If you claim to know God and love does not begin to come out of you, your vision of God is tainted or you aren't even looking at him.

Before you think that's too harsh of a statement, that's exactly what John moves to in verse 8: Anyone who does not love does not know God. . .<sup>4</sup> This means that they're not even a Christian. In John 17:3, Jesus states these words in prayer to the Father: **And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**<sup>5</sup> To know God is to know Love. To know Love is to then love one another. So, we come to the second point John makes. Not only is God the source, but

## 2. God himself is the origin of love (v. 8).

I'm kind of splitting hairs here, but I think it's a good hair to split. God doesn't simply harness love and distribute it like an electric company does with electricity and then sends it to homes and through outlets. God himself *is* the electricity. John says in verse 8 that anyone who doesn't love doesn't know God because God *is* love. There are only three occasions in the New Testament where we get a phrase like this about God. John 4:24 says that God is spirit. We're told that God is a consuming fire in Hebrews 12:29. Now we're told that God is love. I bring up these other passages because when people hear God is love, they take their definition of love and they say that's all God is. So, to some, "God is tolerance." Or, "God is only affirmation." Or, "God is always telling us what's wrong so we can be perfect." God is a consuming fire (which speaks of judgment) and he is also love. Saying "God is love" does not mean he's nothing else. It does mean that he himself is love and also that in all he does, he's loving. I like how a man named John Stott wrote about this: **[If] his judging is in love, his loving is also in justice. He who is love is light and fire as well. Far from condoning sin, his love has found a way to xpose it (because he is light) and to consume it (because he is fire) without destroying the sinner, but rather saving him (Stott, *The Letters of John*, p. 161).**

In all God does, he is wholly perfect and perfectly holy! To come in contact with God and be reconciled to him through Jesus means you will then begin to love. God's love is *that* powerful. Have you experienced that love? If you haven't, I can't wait to tell you more. If you have, but you have found yourself to be like the Ephesian church (forgetting the love you had at first), we need to move on to the final reason why we love:

## 3. God has put his love on display to the world (vv. 9-10).

If you ever feel your love growing cold for the Lord, do you know what you need? For God to refresh you in Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross. That's actually what John does right here. You see, John can state that God is the source and that God himself is love, but where has he most significantly and best displayed it? Answer: through sending Jesus to this earth and Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. Let's read verses 9-10: In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into

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<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 4:8.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 17:3.

the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.<sup>6</sup>

In verse 9, John speaks a little more generically. He says that **God sent his only Son into the world to give life**. Some translations say his “only begotten Son.” The idea of the Greek word describes an utterly unique relationship. Son doesn’t mean that Jesus was created or born at some point in eternity past. It’s a unique relationship. Thus, in modern English translations, they say “only” Son. Even though we are adopted into God’s family as sons and daughters, Jesus’ relationship with the Father is unique.

God sent his Son. Last week, I talked about the love of God and related it to us as parents when we see our children in pain. We want to rescue them, don’t we? We hurt at their hurts. Whether your child is an infant in the ER or your child is 35 years old, dealing with a trauma; parents hurt for their children. God has put himself on display in sending his Son to this sinful, broken, cursed world. Jesus, who is God, was sent into the world. Note that. That means Jesus existed before coming to this earth. He is, as Isaiah said, Lord who was high and lifted up in the throne room. He is Holy, Holy, Holy. And he was sent by the Father to this world. Why would the Father send him here – from Heaven’s glories, being worshipped and adored incessantly? So that we might live through him. There is no other way for humans to be saved.

Every human is born with Adam as their representative. He was a sinner. We are all sinners. We need a new representative. That representative is Jesus. He was sent into this world to reveal God’s righteousness and live in utter perfection and be a new representative so that a new humanity could be forgiven and brought to life. Isn’t that incomprehensible? It ought to be to us. I know I’ve said this in the past, but I’ll say it again. When the angels rebelled against God in Heaven and fell, God never came up with a plan to rescue them. God is perfectly just and loving to judge all those angels. But when Adam and Eve sinned (even before they sinned), God tells us he had a plan to rescue human beings. That plan meant that God the Son would take on flesh and become the representative for a new humanity. But there’s more. God didn’t just send Jesus to give life. Jesus actually had to do more than be perfect.

**God sent Jesus to be the wrath-appeaser for sinners.** The end of verse 10 says, “he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”<sup>7</sup> The word “propitiation” means “wrath-appeaser.” Every sin deserves God’s just punishment. If God doesn’t punish sin, he’s no longer just. How then can God both punish sin and forgive sinners? Sounds impossible, but God has designed the world with the need for representatives. Jesus comes in as perfect. He’s also the mediator because he’s God and man. And Jesus, even though he never sinned, took our sin in our place on the cross. And the greatest horror of the cross was not the torture and rejection by people whom he loved. It was when God poured out the punishment you and I deserved on Jesus. The punishment for myriads of sinners for innumerable sins was taken by Jesus on the cross. Thus Jesus cry, “Why have you forsaken me?” He’s the only person who lived perfectly and was rejected by God. But he endured this for people like you and me, so that we could be accepted by God even though we rejected him. We know God has accepted this sacrifice because Jesus rose from the dead!

I hope and pray that you are moved and shaped by this love of God. If the life and death of Jesus doesn’t move you, if you can’t say with Paul that you determine to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, if you think God’s love is better displayed in other ways, you’ve lost sight of your sinfulness

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<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 4:9–10.

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 4:10.

and God's eternal love to cover over your sins in Jesus and declare you righteous in his sight and to call you his own child.

Do you know love? If so, you must love one another. If you've forgotten love, don't just try to work hard at loving one another. Pray to the Lord to renew your heart. Talk to other Christians and ask for prayer. **Ventura, let us love one another. Our Father is the source and origin of love, and he has given us the perfect display of his love.**

With this, let's move into communion together.