

July 6/7 2019 - Part 12 – 1 John: This is Love

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SERMON SUMMARY

1 John 4:7-12

God's love is the heart of the Bible and a dominant theme in the Apostle John's writings. John uses the word "love" 46 times in this letter. His message can be summarized in three words – "God loves me." Still, we struggle to personalize God's love to shape our identity and our life experiences distort God's image. We think God is angry with us and all He sees is our sin; that God is disappointed because we have let him down; or ignoring us as unimportant. The Bible tells us God's Father heart overflows with deep, unconditional and transformative love toward his beloved children. We cannot remain unchanged when we genuinely experience His love. In *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer says, "**What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.**" Our conception of God influences the shaping of our lives.

John describes the heart of God's character with a simple phrase. The text does not say God is loving: it says **God is love** (1 John 4:8). If God were loving only, it would be another of His attributes like mercy; yet the Bible never says God is mercy. Love is his nature, the core of his being. Love is not just something God does; it is who He is. What God does is an extension of His love. Even His judgement is an expression of His love.

We quickly learn that acceptance hinges on our good behaviour. Our love is often conditional or performance-based; or something we like in a person. We bring this understanding into our relationship with God. But God's love is different! He loves us because that's his nature, not because we are loveable or deserve to be loved. In the ancient world it was thought appropriate to love only those regarded as worthy of being loved. We tend to love those who please us. God's love is different, based not on feelings but on His will; he chooses to love us. Jesus died on the cross and demonstrated the full extent of his love when we were hostile to him and enemies of God. God's love does not hinge on performance or actions. He cherishes you as you are, not a future version of you. Nothing you can do makes God love you more, and nothing you can do makes Him love you less.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God (1 John 4:7-8). All of us, including non-Christians, can express love because we are all made in God's image. We serve a triune God (the Christian understanding of One God who exists in three persons sharing a perfect love within a sacred community of three) who created us to extend and share in this circle of love. God's love is practical, real and clearly expressed through the person of Jesus Christ. God's commitment to us came at a huge cost – the death of his dearly beloved Son. Jesus came to redeem us, forgive us and make us a part of His family. We must understand the cross to understand God's love for us (1 John 4:10). When Jesus willingly bore the cross and shed his blood, each drop had your name written on it. We can say with utmost confidence: This is how I know God loves me (1 John 4:9). God initiates His love towards us, and our love for God follows. If we cannot love, we have not experienced the One who is Love (1 John 4:11-12). We make God's love visible when we show love.

July 6/7 2019 – Part 12 – Discussion Questions

Edi Dygert, Sandi Somers

IN

1. Whose love do you treasure – why?
2. When you love someone, how do you show it?
3. Sometimes we try to make love what we think it ought to be. If you have done this, discuss your success or failures.

UP

4. What is the difference between saying "God is Love" and "God is loving".
5. Throughout the Bible, and in your own life, how has God shown, and continues to show his love?

6. Some people think that only when we are good enough that God will love us. How does God's unconditional love affect your ability to receive God's love: just as you are now, not some future, cleaned-up version?

OUT

7. In what ways does God want us to show his love to others? How does that teach you that love is a response to the love that we have received?

8. What are you doing to make God's love visible to those surrounding you?

1 John 4:7-12 ⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.