

Loved People Love People

Preached: 3/21/2021; 5th Sunday in Lent – Germantown;

Opening Prayer

- The Churches of God have ministry in Haiti. Our Church provides financial support for a Church in Haiti. Haiti is going through a terrible time right now. Gangs are committing acts of violence against the people and police. Our medical ministry continues but there is great risk. Please pray for Haiti.

Scripture

1 John 4:7-12

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

Message

Loved People Love People

For the past several weeks I have been talking about the phrase; **God Loves You!** It is a short theological statement that can change our lives once we fully grasp the significance of it. So often we it becomes a “throw around” phrase, like **Have a good day.** My challenge has been that we think about how significant it is to know that we are loved by God. When that grips our heart, it will be evident in the way we think, feel, behave, that we truly believe that God loves us.

In this passage that I read today, John reminds us that God is Love. That does not mean that Love is God. And it does not mean that love is all that God is. But we affirm that **one of the things that we know to be true about God is that He is Love.** In Exodus 33 & 34, Moses prays that God would teach him about His character. **“If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you.” (Ex. 33:13)** As this story continues into chapter 34, God answers Moses’ prayer: He passes in front of Moses and declares His character to Moses. **“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (Ex. 34:6-7).** God reveals Himself to Moses and the people of Israel – and to US – that **Love is a significant part of His Nature.** He is not self-centered. He is not manipulative. He does not love for self-gratification. He is compassionate – He delights in demonstrating kindness toward those who are the objects of His love. He exists to bless others – for their benefit. God values those who are the objects of His love as **worthy ends in and of themselves.** People are not a means to an end for God. God’s love is **eternal and constant.** As we look at this passage again from 1 John 4, one of the things that we learn about God’s love is His willingness to sacrifice Himself for the benefit of others. God has come into the world in the person of Jesus and has given up His life so that our sins could be atoned for – or paid for. God’s love is a love that is perfect. It does not depend on the weather, or on what kind of day he is having. It does not even depend on the response of the recipients of His love. He loves and is willing to forgive those who are guilty of wickedness, rebellion and sin. God’s Love is Amazing!

To be loved by a Perfect God, is a pretty incredible, life changing reality. It may move us deep in our spirit when we reflect on the nature of God’s love. The phrase **God Loves Me** is not just a trite saying. I have shared that in my years of ministry as a pastor, I have encounter people – believers in Jesus – who have a hard time believing that God could love them. They feel unlovable. Because of they way that have been treated by others, or because of some trauma they have experienced in their lives, they just cannot understand that God would love them. And so they live their lives in such a way that demonstrates that they really do not believe that God loves them. I have been considering some “If Then” statements to demonstrate my point.

- **If it is true that God loves me, as a believer, He has become my Father, and I am His beloved child.** I can enjoy an intimacy with God that I did not know before. I will draw near to Him without fear. I will trust that God is going to take care of me and provide for me as a perfect Father would provide for His children.

- **If it is true that God loves me, as a believer I understand that God has forgiven my sins completely.** I no longer live, burdened with feelings of guilt and shame. I am clean.
- **If it is true that God loves me, as a believer I delight in doing His will.** Obeying God is not burdensome but an expression of our joy.

Today as we look at this phrase once again, I want to suggest that for someone who actually believes that God loves them, someone who has grasped the reality of the statement, **God Loves Me**, we will see evidence in the way they treat others. **If it is true that God loves me, I will be able to love other people.**

That is John's conclusion in this passage. He assures us that we are the objects of God's love. He has come into the world for our benefit. So, if we understand that we have been the object of God's love, we will demonstrate that we believe that by loving others. Listen to John's conclusions:

- Let us love one another, for love is from God
- Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God
- Anyone who does not love does not know God
- If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another
- If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

For John it is pretty clear that the person who has been the object of God's love will love others. And it does not appear that we have to "work at it". When we are in relationship with God, our life will be filled up with love and it will spill over into the lives of those around us. Back up in chapter 3, John paints a picture for us of what love will look like.

1 John 3:16-17 (The Message) ¹⁶⁻¹⁷ ***This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear.***

But once again I often see a breakdown from what people say they believe and what we see in their living. How often do we see people who believe that God Loves Them, but we do not see love in their lives for others. One of the disturbing realities in our culture today is the extent of mistreatment and hatred toward others. It is sad to me to read about an act of violence carried out against someone of another race, or ethnic background, or economic need and then we later hear that the one who perpetrated the violence professes to be a believer in Jesus. How can this be? How can someone who believes that God loves them, behave in such an unloving way?

Now I realize that loving others is not always easy. There are people who may be easy to love. They are kind to us and nice people. But what about people who are unlovable. People whose lifestyle and values conflict with ours? People who dislike or hate us? People who have messed up their lives so bad. Can we love them? If we have experienced God's love for us, we should be able to love others. John does not leave us any "outs" or exceptions.

This kind of life of love is only possible when we are empowered by God to do it.

If it is true that God really does love me, then I will love others.

Closing Prayer