

God is Love

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Preacher: McDonald Nzua

[0:00] If you do have your Bibles, I would like to invite you to turn with me to the book of 1 John, and I will read from chapter 4, verses 7 through to verse 12.

! Let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.

In this is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

[1:24] This is the word of God. A story is told of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes and his good friend, Dr. Watson.

It is said that one day they set out to go on a camp. They decided to go camping. So as you would imagine, they arrived at their destination, and they pitched their tent, and I'm sure they did all the things that goes with camping.

They probably had a good braai and a good drink. And at night, they retired to bed, so they went into their tent. And it so happened that while they were sleeping during the night, at some point, Sherlock wakes up.

He wakes up and he turns to his friend, and he says, Watson, Watson, wake up. And then Watson wakes up, and Sherlock says to Watson, what do you see?

For a moment, Watson thinks, and then he quickly responds. He looks up the sky, and then he says, I see so many stars.

[2:48] And this tells me that there are so many galaxies out there. Sherlock kept quiet, and he gave him another chance.

And Watson quickly then went on, and he said, by the way, the way the sky looks, and the way everything looks, the way the stars are positioned, it tells me that tomorrow we're going to have fair and brilliant weather.

Sherlock, keep quiet. And Watson goes at it again. He says, and by the way, the way the stars are arranged, the way the stars are so beautiful, does tell me that there is a designer behind this design.

There is a creator, an intelligent creator, who created all these stars. So theologically speaking, there is a divine out there. Watson goes at it again, and he says, and by the way, because there is divine, it shows us that we're so finite, and this designer is great, and Sherlock could not take it anymore.

So he quickly turns to him, he punches him, and he says, you idiot, our tent is gone. He says, you stupid, our tent is gone.

[4:19] Either it was stolen, or it got blown off. But the point is this. Watson was caught up on the lofty things, on the big ideas, on making deductions of what he thought was happening, which all those things were true, and he missed out on the basic.

Friends, this morning, it is my hope to firstly convince us that you and me, we are like Watson. Sometimes we get caught up in lofty ideas that we miss out on what is very basic and what is very plain.

But praise be to God. Praise be to God, because through John, if you read the whole of John, it is a very brief, very beautiful, very powerful, and a straightforward letter.

What Don does, and what he does brilliantly, is that he brings up an idea, and he draws implication based on that idea.

He says something that is very basic. He says, friends, in chapter 1, God is light. Therefore, walk in light.

[5:32] In the same chapter, John says, friends, by the way, God doesn't like darkness. God doesn't like sin. God is holy and is righteous.

Jesus says, and he's righteous. So those who profess to know God or to be known by God should walk away from sin. He says, and by the way, God is the only one who is perfect.

He's the only one who is good. He's the only one without sin. You and I, we do have sin. So John says that, and then the implication for that, he says, therefore, you should confess your sins.

In chapter 2, John picks up on then this idea of love. Actually, he makes a big deal out of love. 46 times, at least, the word love or agape appears in this very brief letter.

So John has got so much to say about love. And maybe before we jump into what John has to say or has to teach us about love this morning, let's just pause for a minute and be honest that love is a big deal.

[6:56] We can agree that all of us, we have different preferences. We have different tastes. We have different hobbies and ambitions. But we do have this thing in common.

We all long to love. We all long to be loved. Love is a need. Love is a big deal.

There's so many songs about love. There's so many stories about love. Friends, love is a big deal.

We not only love to be loved or to pursue love, but some of us even love just the idea of love.

And often this desire, which is God placed in each and every one of us, when not met, it leaves us longing and searching for love in places that can never offer us love.

It leaves us more empty. Friends, it is true that we have other needs.

[8:17] It is true that money is important. It is true that, I don't know, large following is important, but much more important than all of those things is love.

We love love. We want to be loved. The good news is this.

Our text this morning zooms in, and it helps us to understand this idea, not just the idea of love, but it shows us that love is much more than an emotion.

Love is much more than what we have made it to be. Love is a person. Our friends, I don't know about you, but that is exciting to me.

Love is a person, and God is love. This morning it is my hope and my prayer that as we look at 1 John chapter 4, we will see that God is love.

[9:24] But not only that, it is my desire that we will also see that this love is not an abstract love.

Actually, God reveals his love to us in Christ Jesus. And lastly, it is my hope and my desire that I will challenge you and challenge myself that those who belong to God love others.

God is love. God's love is revealed in Christ Jesus, and those who belong to God love others.

Let us look together again at our text. Verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world.

[10:42] Verse 7 opens by an invitation or by a command to love one another. But what John does brilliantly is that in verse 7 and verse 12, hangs or is anchored on verse 8.

In verse 8, he is very explicit and very clear that God is love. And friends, this morning, I want us to look at this simple truth and go where it takes us.

God is love. I don't know about you. I don't know where you're coming from, and I don't know what it is that you're going through and how or what you have been told about God, but the word meets us today and it tells us that God is love.

God is love. God is love. What John is getting to here is a truth that there was never a time where God wasn't loving. God in his disposition, in his character, he is love.

What John is getting to this morning is that God is the source and he is the author of love. What verse 8 means is that love that God in every act and all his acts in eternity past, modern times, in eternity future, he will always be loving.

[12:27] whether he creates, whether he provides, whether he disciplines, whether he judges, God is loving in what he is doing, in what he does at all times.

You see, John says that in verse 8, but he's not satisfied to just leave it like that. He does something much more beautiful from verse 9 to 10.

He shows us how this concept or this truth that God is love is revealed to us. John is not satisfied to just leave it as an abstract thing.

He tells us in verse 9, we read, in this, the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world.

Because God is loving, because God is kind and benevolent in who he is, he demonstrates his love that he pursues those who were unloving and unlovable.

[13:35] In verse 10, we read that God's love was made manifest among us that he sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him.

Verse 10 double tapes on that or gives us more to go with. He says, in this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and he sent his son to be the propitiation of our sin.

That which we long for, that which we desire, that which we spend money on to get hold of which is love, God is that. But you see, the love of God or who God is is slightly different sometimes to how we have created or how we think he is.

And John is very specific and is very helpful in reminding us that love is seen in this way, that God who had created everything for his glory and for his enjoyment and for his good reviews his love to us by sending his only son to come and die for our sins.

Friends, love is costly. The type of love that John is talking about this morning, the type of love that we read in this text is a costly love, it's an unconditional love.

[15:12] It is a powerful love that gives all, that remembers no record of wrong, that pursues the undeserving and the unworthy. It is a love that is much more than a sentimental love.

It is a love that is bigger and more powerful than the love we see in movies. It is the love that you and I need. And God's love is demonstrated in that that God loved us before we could love him.

Actually, God did something much more powerful. God had created the heavens and the earth, we told in Genesis 1, for his glory and for his enjoyment. But sin taking its opportunity came and disrupted that in Genesis chapter 3, we are told instead of believing the word of this loving God, of this kind, benevolent God, man, believed the word of the devil, of the evil one.

And friends, if we too be honest, that is the pattern that is repeated across history, that there is this love who created everything for his own good and for his own glory, but instead of loving him back, we love created things instead of the creator.

God does not give up on his people. In Genesis chapter 3, after the disobedience, a promise was made that in the fullness of time, God would send his only begotten son as an act of his love towards humanity and his pursuit towards humanity to deal with sin once and for all.

[17:09] You see, God is love, but there is much more to God. God, because his love, because his pure, because his glorious and his kind, God is opposed to sin.

God hates sin. God doesn't like sin. Sin is the one thing that God doesn't like. And his love is made manifest in this.

He didn't let or allow sin to have the last say. He comes and pursue his people who were steeped in their sins. Friends, that is love.

In verse 9, John tells us that God's love was made manifest. In other words, God's love is not just theory, it's not just word. There's an action that begs up his love for his creation.

and this action is that is the cross. He sends his son. John does something very beautiful here. He uses a big word.

[18:21] He says, invest in this is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us and he sent his son to be the propitiation of our sins.

God is getting to here, friends, a simple truth with powerful and significant implications for our life, is that love doesn't begin with us.

Love doesn't begin with you. No matter how much you search it, no matter how much you look for it, love is a costly thing and the cost of love is not one that you or I could have ever paid.

And God in his kindness makes the payment. He comes, he sends his son to die as a propitiation for our sins.

That's a very big word that means that God's anger that was justified was taken up by his son. In other words, this God, this perfect God became the judged.

[19 : 34] The judgment, the punishment that we're deserving, God took it upon himself. Friends, that is love. He loved us.

He sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. What this also teaches us is that our sins, our very sins that keeps us from loving God, that keeps us pulling us down, even when we profess to love God, we're paid for.

We're paid for. We're paid for by God. Why? Because he loved you. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him would not perish.

Friends, we were destined to perish. God is love. He made a way for you and me. I want to slow down a bit and speak to someone.

Maybe you are here this morning and you are not a believer. Maybe you're not completely put off by the idea of Christianity but you have a view of God that this God is angry with you.

[20 : 58] This God is not as loving as Christians make him out to be. I want to invite you to look at 1 John. 1 John chapter 4 tells us and reminds us and it comes to you this morning and tells you that actually God doesn't come to you and condemns you.

He took the condemnation that you deserved. God is love. On him the weight of your sin. on him your shame.

On him everything was laid and because he took your place, through him you can live today. Maybe you're here and you are a believer and maybe like Watson you get easily caught up on the big things that you quickly dismiss the very basic things and the very basic doctrine that God is love.

I want to invite you to consider that God, the way he has reviewed himself, he has reviewed himself as love. And he saved you, he redeemed you, before there was anything lovable about you.

and now wouldn't it be unwise to think that you can buy his love? You cannot buy his love.

[22 : 29] It's costly. Rest in his love. Trust in his love. Look up, look beyond yourself and look at the cross where Christ died for you and me.

That was his declaration of his love for you and me. Maybe you've been caught up in a cycle of bad habits or of sin and you have started to believe and think that you just need to work on this thing, you just need to knock off this habit before God can love and accept you again.

Friends, the truth of the matter is that God loves us in spite of our sin. God loves you in spite of your sin. Actually, if you look at 1 John chapter 1, he says, if you claim to be without sin, you make God out to be a liar.

But if you confess your sin, which we have the privilege of doing soon after the service, soon after the sermon, if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive you.

You see, the love of God is bigger than what we sometimes make it out to be. And the love of God is central or ought to be central to everything that we do.

[23 : 57] The interesting thing that we see in our text is that, and I would hope and I would think that John would just drive across this point that God is love and you would end there, but it doesn't.

He said because God is love and because God has died for your sins, because God has pursued you while you were in darkness, actually while you were in darkness itself, steeped in the empty life that was handed down to your forefathers because God pursued you and love found you and love is committed to you.

The true proof that you have experienced this love is that you also love others. Friends, I don't know about you, but I don't always love others.

And by the way, I have good reasons to not love others because some people are not so easy to love. And I'm not talking about my wife and my son now, they're very easy to love.

And the text comes to us. love. And they say, if you have experienced this love, if you have tasted this love, you also ought to love others.

[25 : 25] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. no one has ever seen God.

If we love one another, God abides in us and this love is perfected in us. Is it okay to you that one of the most powerful ways to proclaim that we belong to God is not by means of shouting it out loud. It's not by starting theological arguments online. It's not by wearing bold printed shirts that God love or God is love.

It's by loving one another. And the text invites us to be those people, to be the people who have experienced the love of God and the people who perpetuate and who continues this cycle of love.

In 1 John chapter 1, the way John opens up his letter is that he tells us that he has experienced or he had experienced that which was from the beginning, that which had been made manifest and he had tasted, he had experienced, and now he was inviting others to experience that.

[26 : 54] could it be that part of why we are sometimes reluctant, part of why it's sometimes so hard to love others is because we are not ourselves experiencing the love of God in fresh ways each day.

And friends, because God is love, because God is seated on the throne and his disposition is love and he keeps on loving on us, he keeps on forgiving us.

Friends, what John invites us to and what I'm calling us to is to experience that on a daily basis but also to extend that to others. One of the stories that left an indelible mark on me is the story of an anabaptist by the name of Dick Willems in the 17th or 16th century.

He was prisoned for his beliefs, his convictions and he was prisoned in Holland. And while he was in prison, it so happened that one day he had the opportunity to escape jail.

But it was at the thick of winter so everything was frozen, prison, including the lakes. He escapes prison and he runs across the lake which was obviously frozen because it was winter and he could do that because he was light and he had been in prison and he had been starved and tortured so he was a skinny man.

[28 : 40] one of his guards pursued him to catch him mostly. And what this guard had not accounted for was that he was slightly heavier than Dick Willems so he couldn't run on the lake on ice as the prisoner was doing.

as he was pursuing him ice cragged and he started drowning. He started drowning and he started crying and because Dick Willems had been captured by the love of God because he knew and he understood what love is instead of running for his freedom agape love made him stop.

So he stops and he turns back to go and rescue and save his captor. He goes and rescues the very same person who had pursued him and who had tortured him.

Why? Because of the love of Christ. Friends, I want to say the same should be true of us.

I want to say this love that John is talking about. It's a powerful love. It's an inconvenient love. It's a costly love. It costs us but before we think how much it costs us, we should maybe stop and see verses 9 and 10 and see how much it costed God.

[30 : 26] He sent his only begotten son. Jesus Christ looked on our conditions and he says, I will go and save those people.

The people who are unlovable, the people who wanted nothing to do with him and he came and he lived a perfect life. He came and he paid the price that you and me could not pay.

friends, love is powerful. Love is a powerful thing.

Love is a God thing. Love is a gospel thing and love is God or God is love. In our world, times with so many of the things that are out there, so many of the things that are in here, so many of the things around us, ask the question, what am I going to get out of this?

During a time where love has to be convenient, I would love to love on you, I would love to sacrificially give myself to you, but it's rather inconvenient at this time.

[31 : 58] In a world where the main message is our comfort, where the main message is our convenience, where the main message is our way.

Friends, may may cultural, I think it is powerful to imbibe some of this, to believe some of these things, to believe who God is and that God is love and to be taken and to be carried to the very implications of this truth. God is love. God has demonstrated his love in that he sent his son to die for us.

He sent his son to die for me. He sent his son to die for you. Are you looking for love? Look no further. God is love. And this morning, he comes to you, not with condemnation, but to meet you and to lift you from wherever you find yourself. Let us pray.

O Lord, we thank you so much for the gift of your word. Your word is true.

and we thank you that in its simplicity you speak to us. You come to us this morning and you remind us that you're the author of love, you're the source of love, and you have demonstrated your love for us and that you died for us and you pursued us.

[34 : 03] Lord, this morning we pray, we pray within our awareness that we do not always love, we pray within our awareness that it is hard to love.

Oh, forgive us. Forgive us for when we have justified being unloving and being unkind to our brothers and sisters. Help us to love.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.