

**FOR THE LOVE OF GOD****1 John 4:7-21****(Read 1 John 4:7-21)**

**Intro:** Is there any question the Apostle John thinks a lot about the subject of love? His followers were probably saying “John, for the love of God! Would ya just lighten up on the love talk?!!!” And his response would probably have been, “Not until you get it right, I won’t.” And over two thousand years later his message is needed more than ever. Beloved, let us love one another, and let’s do it better and better until we know, and everyone we meet knows, what the love of God is.

As you just heard, John repeats LOVE ONE ANOTHER three times in our passage for today, because he is pointing out that the instinctive response a true Christ Follower has from the time of their second birth, is love. Put simply, a person who knows God and has been born of God will respond to God’s nature because it has become their nature. If we love one another is the test of the reality of our transformed life.

You see, it’s very clear in verse 7 . . .

**Love’s origin is in God**

- We love one another, because love comes from God. The truth is, love can only come from God, and its very source is God.
- Following that logic, the fact that we love one another is evidence of our walk with God. I just said that true Christ Followers love one another and they love others, period, because they have been with God and they are mirroring him. So, love is the test of our true faith. One commentator writes, “*God is love – the very foundation of the matter. Love is a valid test of our fellowship and our sonship because God is love.*”
- And there is no criteria at all for NOT loving others. Whether or not we deserve it, God loves us, and so whether or not others deserve it we are to love them. *Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.* (v. 7) That’s why F. F. Bruce’s words on the front of your bulletin are so poignant, “*The followers of Jesus are children of God, and they should manifest the family likeness by doing good to all, even those who deserve the opposite.*” More on that family likeness in a couple minutes.
- Let me finish this bit on loving without reserve with a quote from Leon Morris who writes, “*God loves, so to speak, not because he finds objects worthy of his love, but because it is his nature to love. His love for us depends not what we are but on what he is. He loves us because he is that kind of God.*” And because we have that kind of heavenly father, we need to emulate him as his kids. And we will find that . . .

**When we love, God is revealed**

- God’s love brought life in Christ. I say it all the time, but it is from a central verse in the Bible, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* John 3:16. God loves us so much that he gave his Son. PERIOD! God’s justice demanded that we had to die, but God gave his son in our place. God’s love essentially overcame his wrath. We see the real God in his love and not in his wrath.
- God’s love restored our lost relationship with him AND it made it possible for us to restore lost relationship others. *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.* (v.8) We pass that love on.
- That is why the love of God is evident in his followers. John points out in verse 12 that people cannot see God, because no one has ever seen God. But because they can see us, and as they see the love God’s children have for one another and for all people, they see him. Warren Weirsbe, in his book on First John tells a great story about G. Campbell Morgan’s family. Morgan was a great English preacher who in his later years, came to America and pastored here as well. He and his wife had many children. His daughters compiled his sermons on the Gospels into a thick volume that is one of my favorite commentaries. They also had 6 sons and every one of them became an accomplished preacher in his own right. One time when they were together and being interviewed, they were asked who was the greatest preacher of the family and their unison response: **OUR MOTHER!** Was she a “preacher”? No, she never entered a pulpit, but she lived Jesus out in front of her husband, her family, and the world. All saw the love of God written all over her.
- Yes, no one has seen God, but on any given day at any given second, you and I can display him to a world that is dying for love.

- If that love is ever called into question John gives us another test. He says *This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.* 1 John 4:13-16a We are in God when we acknowledge Jesus is the son of God – and the Spirit testifies to it. God lives in us and we live in God and in his love.

- And about that love . . .

### **God is love – Love is God**

- The terms are interchangeable. By definition if you’ve “seen” one, you’ve “seen” the other. And here is another thing, God is love means more than God is loving. It means that love is his essential nature. **Love is what God is.**
- That is why the love we are to have for others, of which John writes, is not a human achievement – it’s not something that can be conjured up in a human heart. It is divine in nature. So when we hear “What the world needs now, is love, sweet love.” If is a legitimate and true statement, but the love that the world longs for and what it needs are two different things. Only God’s love through his followers will satisfy the world’s deepest longing.
- And that love of God brings life. John tells us, *Whoever lives in love live in God and God in them.* v. 16c. Julian Love writes *“Life always needs some power to bind its loose ends together. . . God is love . . . God is the very essence of love.”*
- And then John throws something in about fear. . .

### **Fear can be cured by love alone**

- Without God’s love we would cower in fear. I think this is what Paul is alluding to when he assured the Thessalonians about their loved ones who had passed away. He writes, *Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.* 1 Thessalonians 4:13. He is saying that Christ followers have no fear of death because they know where their eternal destination is. That hope is real. It’s not pie in the sky – Christ Followers really have no fear.
- And John shows that people who love with the love of the Lord have no fear because fear comes if and when we know we deserve punishment. If I’m driving down Rt. 42 or I71 and I’m driving at the limit . . . or a little above – and I see a police cruiser, I might reflexively take my foot off the gas pedal, but I have no further guilt. But, say the limit is 70 mph, and I’m cruising at 90, and I see flashing lights in my rearview, my heart will leap with terror. I know I’m toast. You know when you are busted, and the fear is real, AND it’s justified. But the love that Christ Followers have for others casts out fear of punishment because it shows they are being like their heavenly Father. That’s why, F. B. Meyer (I think) wrote, *“Love is the wafted fragrance of paradise.”*
- And finally . . .

### **Our Love is a response to God’s love**

- John tells us in our closing verses that we must simply pass it on. We love BECAUSE he loves us. I already showed how the world sees God by looking at us. So it stands to reason that we simply pass his love on. And in the same way that God’s love is selfless, our love for one another must be self-giving just like his. It seems like it should be a no-brainer, but in the same way John has to remind us over and over and over again to love one another, we need to be reminded that we must be selfless.

**Conclusion:** Here’s the point: We need to overflow with the love of God. I particularly love how F. B. Meyer puts it, *“If we are willing to be channels through which God’s love flows to others, there need be no limit to the fullness of the holy current.”* And he goes on to say, *“The vessel placed below the waterfall will be filled to overflowing.”* Are you overflowing with the love of Jesus? Even when people don’t deserve it? You can’t do it on your own, when we love anyone, especially those who are so unlovable, it is not us – we can only love with the love of God. He makes it possible. Allow him to fill you, for the love of God, with the love of God. Amen.

**People are up front to pray with you . . .**