

June 7, 2015
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Communion
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from 1 John 4:7-12.

1. Define love like God shows to us.
2. What are some of the chief differences between God-kind of love and the love humans naturally have and show?
3. If we cannot achieve complete freedom from the effects of sin in this life, should we bother striving for that goal?
4. Why is it important for us to desire for other people to be like God?

LOVE EACH OTHER **1 John 4:7-12**

The other day at a morning prayer meeting as we shared prayer requests, I asked the men to pray for me because I had been feeling rather ornery. Do you ever get that way? Sometimes there is a piling up of circumstances that causes us to become edgy and hard to get along with. But in my case, I couldn't think of anything in particular that would serve as a catalyst to that end. I just felt like being grumpy. We all know that the root cause of that kind of attitude is self-centeredness. Therefore, it is true that the less we think about ourselves, the less sensitive we are to circumstances that don't please us.

I read a story recently about a lady who was waiting in an airport for her flight to board. Along the way to the gate she stopped

to purchase a package of cookies. Then she made her way to her gate and sat down to read the newspaper. She heard a rustling noise and looked over to see the man beside her helping himself to the cookies. Not wanting to make a scene, she leaned over and took one herself, hoping he'd get the message. Then she heard more rustling. She couldn't believe it. The man was helping himself to another cookie! There was only one left! She watched in disbelief as he broke the remaining cookie in two, pushed half across to her, popped the other half in his mouth, and left. She was still furious when her flight was announced. Imagine how she felt when she opened her purse to get her ticket out—and found her unopened packet of cookies!

That story begs a question. With which of those two people do we generally identify? Are we the lady who gets miffed because we are sure someone is doing us wrong, or are we the man who responds kindly even when it is obvious that someone is taking advantage of us? We are probably not too far off to conclude that the man who shared his cookies rather than embarrass the offender did so out of love. That is a very elementary illustration of the kind of attitude God expects the members of the Church to show to each other. God loves us to the extreme. Because we experience His extreme love, we should love each other at least a little bit.

The Expectation and Reason (v.7).

God stated His expectation for us with these words: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God (v.7a)*. Obvious is the fact that we should be characterized by love for each other. We are the beloved, people loved by God and by other Christians. God expects us to be loving all the time, or, as the verb tense might indicate, characterized by love. In this statement, “one another” is the object of our love.

It is important for us to stop and consider that our love for each other is specifically identified. It is to be *agapao* love. That is a unique love that desires for the object of the love to have that which is best according to God's standard even if it requires sacrifice from the giver of love.

Therefore, the love God commends for His people cannot be merely *phileo* love. This is another common Greek word for love in the New Testament that speaks of a strong affection like love for a

sibling or a close friend. Neither does God desire for us to have *ludus* kind of love. This Greek word is not found in the New Testament. However, it describes a very popular type of love that is a playful kind of affection or puppy love exhibited among pre-teens. God definitely does not commend to us *eros*. This Greek word gives us the English word *erotic*. It is sinful passion. It is something even the pagan Greeks considered to be dangerous because it was generally out of control. It is possibly the most common idea in the minds of Americans when they speak or sing of love. Nor does God desire for His beloved to exercise *epithumia* which is lust or strong desire. Again this is what most Americans think love is.

We are to practice self-sacrificing love that desires the best for the recipient of love. Our text reveals that the source of that real love is God. Since God is the source of love, it cannot be sensual, selfish, fleshly, or exalt human weakness. Since God is the source of true love, it has to be perfect in character, holy in motivation, honorable in manifestation. Therefore, perfect love desires the best – which is perfection.

That must be the case because God is perfect. Because God is perfect, God's original creation was perfect. But we know that sin marred God's perfect creation, and that marred creation continues a downward path to less and less conformity to perfection. God's love for the world has as its goal the restoration of His chosen people and all created things to the original state. Therefore, it is this love for perfection that allowed God to send the Son into the fallen, imperfect world in order to redeem it from sin and restore it to perfection.

Why would God ever expect such a desire in us? The last part of verse seven begins to explain the reason for this desire as it states, *and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God (v.7b)*. The reason God desires for us to show His kind of love is because the people who are loving have already been born from God. This means that we who are born again can do this! Whoever is practicing this unique, God-kind of love, does so because he or she has already experienced the miracle of Holy Spirit regeneration.

This means that normal, unregenerated people cannot love like this. By nature we love ourselves first. By nature we don't really care about others unless the relationship somehow effects us. By nature we are apathetic and really don't care about others. I read the other day that researchers have found a cure for apathy. The problem is that

they have not found anyone who is the least bit interested in their discovery. That trait should never be true in the person who is born again.

The second reason God desires for us to practice His love is because the people who are loving are knowing God. To know God as the word is used here is not the same as being familiar with God. We use the word *know* loosely to speak of some familiarity or acquaintance with someone or something. Merely being acquainted with God will not cause us to love as we should. Many people in Jesus' day were acquainted with Him but loved themselves. Most people in our day who claim a familiarity with God prove that they love themselves first.

But this particular word (*gnosko*) speaks of a more intimate understanding or relationship. To know according to this word is to learn through association with an object or person. It means to come to understand through experience. It carries the idea of proving or verifying something. Therefore, people who love do so because we have learned what love means through our experience with God who is the source of true love. Having established the need, God inspired John to pen some supporting arguments to the challenge.

If You Know God, You Know Love (vv.8-10).

To know God is to know love has to be truth because God is love. *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love (v.8)*. Non-loving people prove they have not come to know God. My use of the word "non-loving" doesn't refer only to mean, nasty, grumpy people – though they are certainly non-loving people. By non-loving we mean people who do not love others with the same kind of love that God has revealed to us.

The amazing thing is that the world is full of people who are quick to argue that they "love" abundantly. There are people who are controlled by lust and the world calls it love. That error has been preached to us for a generation from Hollywood and now the American public in general believes it. There are people who are controlled by emotion and call it love. There are people who really do desire for others to have what is best and willingly sacrifice to help others achieve "best." The problem is that "best" is their standard – their personal interpretation of what is best. Therefore, the bleeding-

heart liberal is sure he is loving because he desires for everyone in the world to be unbiased, tolerant, unbigoted, and accepting of everything except biblical Christianity. Generally the American culture's idea of "best" is more money, more gadgets, better homes, better education, more food, and sharing the wealth of the rich. Many of these people give their money, their time, their energy, and even their lives to charitable works and organizations because they are "loving others."

People like that wonder why you don't love like they do. They say to the God-fearing, Bible-reading, Christian, "Why can't you be loving and tolerant people who are different than you?" They wonder why you avoid doing what you consider to be sin while everyone else in your culture enjoys it. They cannot fathom your standard of "best." Here in our text, God said that because they do not know God from experience or even through association, they cannot imagine a standard of best that is primarily spiritual and eternal. They definitely cannot imagine how sinlessness could be good at all.

Because God is love, people who experience Him pick up on the real meaning of love. Consider the fact that people who love God know things like this about God: God hates everything that falls short of His glory. Paul wrote, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth (Romans 1:18)*. The Old Testament historian confessed about his peers, *But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy (2 Chronicles 36:16)*. David concluded that *Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned (Psalm 34:21)*. He was convinced that *God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him! (Psalm 68:1)*.

But we who know God also know that at the same time God has compassion on all people and desires for them to be redeemed from the effects of that which He hates. Moses prayed, *You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode (Exodus 15:13)*. In an amazing experience, *The LORD passed before Moses and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and*

transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7). Peter assured us that *the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9)*.

Because we know these truths about God's character, our love should be focused on spiritual and eternal goals just like His love is. We learned this truth when God revealed His love through Christ (vv.9-10). So we should love like this – God sent His only Son into the world. *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 (v.9)*. There is no reason for anyone not to understand God's love because He has made it manifest among us. God's love has been demonstrated to the whole fallen creation. The word translated *manifested (fenerao)* means to make visible, cause to be seen, to show or make known.

I recently read an article about how three young mathematicians in Israel are making startling discoveries on some old discarded pieces of pottery. Through the use of a camera that would take multi-spectral images of the ostraca (pieces of potsherds), high quality pictures that capture frequencies of light that are invisible to the human eye, they have revealed messages written thousands of years ago. These pieces of pottery that appear to have nothing on them actually contain messages asking for help because the Assyrians were attacking Samaria or, in the case of Jerusalem, being under attack by Babylonians. The special cameras make the invisible known and prove the Bible to be true. So, too, God made the invisible known and proved His love to be true through sending Jesus Christ among us.

Second, because we know God, we should love like this – God sent His only Son to satisfy the cost of our sins. *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 (v.10)*. Because He loves us, God sent the Son to be the means for wiping away our sins. Because God loves, He sent us the only means for Him to be satisfied from the grievance of our sins. God did not provide the "satisfaction for sins" because we loved Him. His love for us, His desire for us to be perfectly free from the effects of sin, like He is, is behind the initiative to provide the means for satisfaction.

Therefore, Paul concluded, *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:3-6).*

If You Know Love, You Reveal God (vv.11-12).

Now we come to an important conclusion in the matter. Love from God results in love toward others. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (v.11).* The argument is that redeemed people prove that God loves us. People who have confessed sin and been forgiven by God know God's love. Our lives ought to reveal that knowledge.

In what way should our lives reveal our knowledge of God's love? Redeemed people ought to love each other. This is real practical. God's plan is not that we simply desire for everyone to have more stuff, to feel good about themselves, to be just like us, or even to enjoy good health. Although that is generally the understanding of love for others on a broad plain according to human wisdom and experience, it is not God's plan for reciprocal love. Rather we ought to love each other by practicing the desire for others to be like God (which is best).

How do we show that kind of love to each other? We honestly, sincerely pray for each other. We encourage each other, building them up with lessons and truths you have learned from God's Word. We challenge each other to live more like Christ. We continually put Bible principles into practice so that you can appeal to them as an example. We do the simple things like show up at gatherings of God's people (church), make contact, show interest in their lives. Maybe we can meet others "off campus" during the week to let them know that we really want them to be successful in living for God's glory.

This ought to be the case for us because, if God is abiding in us, His love has to be evident. *No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us (v.12).* We

know that no one has seen God, regardless of what some folks may claim. In the past, God occasionally gave a glimpse of His glory to special saints like Moses or the disciples. But no person has seen God especially since He is a spirit.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the "beloved" to show God to the world. God's plan is for us to *live out* His love that is within us. If we truly desire for others to achieve the very best possible, even if it requires our sacrifice, our goal for them will be that they will be free from the effects and impact of sin. But do we not also know that perfect freedom from the effects of sin will not be possible in this life? Yes, but striving for that freedom is to be our lifestyle.

Paul gave us the standard when he wrote, *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:12-14).*

Even Jesus taught us to pray for the goal of living apart from sin's domination over us. He taught the disciples, *"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'" (Matthew 6:9-13).* If we pray according to this model prayer, we are to acknowledge that God is sinless (*hallowed*) (v.9). We are to express the desire for things on earth to be free from sin just like they are in heaven (v.10). We are to ask for basic necessities, not beg God for unnecessary stuff that is simply an expression of covetousness (v.11). We are to ask to be forgiven from sin just like we forgive others who sin against us (v.12). In fact, we are to ask God to help us be free from the impact of sin as He delivers us from temptation and evil (v.13).

We can strive to live apart from the influence of sin and desire the same for others because God is living in us. *God abides in us and his love is perfected in us (v.12b).* God's love has already been brought to completion in us (perfect tense, passive voice, participle). How so? The Holy Spirit of God who lives in us is already the perfect

manifestation of love. If we will live under His control, we will demonstrate the love of God to the world.

Generally, love as it is defined and practiced by the world is fraught with human error, weakness, and limitations. Human love is all about the passing, frivolous, temporal things. The love of God is about spiritual and eternal matters which impact eternal souls forever. God has revealed His love for the world through providing the sacrifice of His beloved Son to remove the effects of sin from us eternal souls forever. We should strive to have every area of our lives impacted by this kind of love for perfect godliness so that our lives are demonstrations of God's love.