

1 John 4:7-11

Easter 6; May 9, 2021

One day two friends named Bill and Steve were discussing the possibility of love. *"I thought I was in love three times,"* said Bill. Steve asked, *"Thought you were in love, what do you mean?"*

The man explained, *"Three years ago, I cared very deeply for a woman who wanted nothing to do with me. So that wasn't love?"* *"No, that was obsession."*

He continued, *"Then two years ago, I cared very deeply for an attractive woman who didn't understand me, and we weren't a good match."* *"Would you call that love?"* asked Steve. *"No,"* said Bill, *"it was mostly infatuation."*

"But then last year, I met a woman while I was on a cruise. She was beautiful and intelligent, a great conversationalist and had a great sense of humor. Everywhere I followed her on that ship, I would get a very strange sensation in the pit of my stomach." Steve asked, *"Well, wasn't that love?"* Bill replied, *"Nope, just motion sickness!"*

Love. What is it? It's so much more than just a feeling. So often, we find ourselves think that humanity is naturally good and knows how to love. If that was true, why does human love fail so much? If humanity is naturally good and on its own has the ability to love, then why is there still rioting, hatred, suspicion, cheating, broken homes, abuse, murder, etc.? As hard as we might try, we cannot possibly love perfectly.

So, if perfect love does not naturally dwell within each of us, then where do we find perfect love? John answers that question for us in our text: **"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."** When God speaks about love here, it is a love that is greater than any love that we possibly can imagine. He loved this world so much that he GAVE his Son to die for it. Jesus loved this world by following the will of his Father and died for it. When we look at the cross, we see not only the perfect example of love; we see LOVE itself. God loves us, even with all of our imperfections and faults.

What does God's love look like? Jesus defines love in our Gospel Lesson for today: **"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."** (John 15:13) Who would you die for? Who would be on that list? I'm pretty certain that I would lay down my life for my wife. I'm pretty certain that I would lay down my kids and their families. I'm pretty certain that I would lay down my life for my larger circle of family or friends. Would I lay down my life for the person who worked on my car last week? Or how about the person that you crossed paths while you were in the store? Would you lay down your life for the person who shot and killed someone that you saw on the news? The answer probably is no. At least, they would certainly not be in my top 10.

Yet, that is exactly what God did for us, isn't it? **"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. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."** He looked at this world that is full of sinners, and he sent his Son to die for them. Jesus came and laid down his life. That's what Jesus did for you. When you were born, your heart and your life were only filled with sin. Yet, when you were baptized, God brought you into his love. He made you his child and made promises to you that cannot be broken. God has come to you and spoken promises of sins forgive and life everlasting in heaven.

Your heart and your life were only filled with sin. But when you were baptized, God brought you into his love. He made you his child and made promises to you that cannot be broken - promises of sins forgiven and life everlasting in heaven. God wants you to LIVE through him.

As you live in that love of God, it will shine through everything you do, not just for each other, but for all those who are around you. It is God's love that will shine all around you. When Benjamin Franklin wished to interest the people of Philadelphia in street lighting, he didn't try to persuade them by talking about it – instead, he hung a beautiful lantern on a long bracket before his own door. Then he kept the glass brightly polished, and carefully hung it at the approach of dusk.

People wandering about on the dark streets of Philadelphia saw Franklin's light a long way off and came to see it. To everyone who walked past its friendly glow that light said: *"Here is a safe place to walk. See that cobblestone sticking out? Don't stumble on it. I'll be here every night lighting a safe path for you."* It wasn't long before Franklin's neighbors began placing lights in brackets on their homes. Soon the city awoke to the value of street lighting. God's love lights a path for you every day that you will live. Unlike the lamps of this world that eventually burn out, the light of God's love will never burn out.

Have you ever doubted God's love? Have you ever thought: *How could God love me?* Have you ever failed to live in God's love? Of course, we have. If we would say that we have never failed in living in God's love, we would be lying. We are all still flawed, sinful human beings who carry a sinful nature that always thinks of itself first. But when this happens, you have the opportunity to live in true love— If so, you are in pretty good company. Moses, Abraham, David, John the Baptist, Jesus' disciples; and the list could go on. God forgives us for those times that we may have been lousy parents. He forgives us for the times that we may have been jealous and impatient. He forgives our laziness. He forgives our foul language. He forgives our worry and fear.

Through faith in Jesus, we trust that love. **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."** GOD IS LOVE! God loves you; he loves me. When we look at that love of God, how can we not love one another? How can we not love our parents, our children, our spouse and everyone else that God has placed into our lives?

Love. It sounds so simple. Yet, it isn't, is it? As sinful human beings, it isn't always easy for us to love. But if you want to see true love, look at these words of Jesus: **"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."** May the Lord enable you to love as God has loved you. Amen.