

God is Love

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Date: 01 August 2021

Preacher: Matt Usherwood

[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, thank you that we have the privilege to have your word, to have your scripture. Father, I ask that you would pour out the Holy Spirit upon us. You'd open our hearts and our minds to your attributes, to these things that you've revealed to us that describe your character.

Father, help us to understand them, to wrestle with them, and to accept them as truth. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. So we're going through the summer series titled Knowing God.

And what we're doing is, each week, we're going individually through each attribute of God, because each attribute makes up God himself. And the thing that you have to know with these attributes is, you can't just cherry-pick one, lower the other, and heighten the other one, because that would make God not God.

It would lower his sovereignty. His true character. We've gone through looking at God is triune. God is infinite. God is sovereign. God is impassable.

And with these, we've also looked at him being omnipotent and omniscient. And today, if you haven't noticed with the text that we've just read, a lot of it has to do with love.

[1 : 18] So today, we're going to be looking at God is love and his attribute of love. And I know this is a hard thing to swallow sometimes, God's love. We all come from different backgrounds.

Myself, I come from a background where my father abandoned me. So I find it quite hard to grasp how God the father can love me. Many of you might have this same feeling, difficulty.

You also might come from backgrounds of having, being in an abusive relationship, where you thought this person was the ultimate, your love, and then they started to abuse you and you had to leave it.

Some of you here could also be like, well, my spouse, the relationship I'm in is perfect. I don't need any other love. It's like, why do I need God's love? If I'm in a perfect relationship, that fulfills me.

Other people here could also be, could say, well, I don't need this relationship thing, this whole aspect of being a loving relationship. I'll just have multiple partners and I'll be happy.

[2 : 20] Or we see it in the movies or in the media or in books. Everything always talks about love. Our whole culture is obsessed with this notion of love. But anything on this earth doesn't compare to the love of God.

And I would like to look at this. I would like to look at his essence of love and what this means to us. So if you could turn with me to 1 John 4, verses 8 to 10.

This is where we're going to camp out for most of this talk. But we'll also mention two other texts as well that also talk about God's love. So again, it's 1 John 4, verses 8 to 10.

And it says in verse 8. It would be helpful if I had the right text. Here we go. So anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.

Now, some of you might be thinking right away that how can, if I don't love, how can I not know God? I feel like I do a good job in my relationship loving.

[3 : 25] Or I feel like our culture in a whole does a great job loving people. I feel like it's the best it's ever been since the beginning. And these are legitimate questions to ask.

But I would like to look at two concepts of love within our culture, which is cultural love and romantic love. And cultural love, you see this as you walk down many city center streets.

You see love is love. Or you hear the Beatles song in the back of your head. Sometimes you hear it playing in coffee shops. All you need is love. Or I saw this. I live in Perth, and I saw this walking down the street.

Love, light, and truth are essential. You also might think you might have this mindset where, like, I just need to find the one true love, and I'll be truly satisfied. You also hear just love one another.

You also hear love wins. Now, what do all these mean? Like, what do these, all these slogans that we hear so often, what do they truly mean?

[4 : 27] When you look at a more narrow look. You see, if we just look at love is love, we've seen this very, it's been very heightened within this past pandemic that we've just, we're going through.

We're still going through, but the height of it, when everyone was in lockdown. You hear love is love. Love your neighbor. And you hear the culture over and over again saying this. But what exactly is it talking about?

Because if you look at it, this love is conditioned. This is a very conditioned love. When people say love is love, but then at the same time, they say you have to follow this certain path, this certain, when the culture says, you must follow love is love, you must love everyone, but if you don't follow my mindset, you cannot be loving.

You're instantly marginalized from the culture. Why is that? Why is it that when this culture that we have is so obsessed with saying we must love each other, we must do all this stuff, but then at the same time, it will turn its back on you if you do not follow its narrative?

Why is that? So the love of the culture is conditional. You have to check certain boxes to be accepted, or you face this new common trend as being canceled.

[5 : 45] You get canceled out. You get marginalized. You get pushed to the side while they continue their thrust. And it's all in the name of love. It's the dominant force of the culture.

And you also see this in our Western culture that it deems its interpretation of love as the most, as the best.

But at the same time, when you look at other cultures, they have different ways of loving their spouses, showing love to their children, and all that kind of stuff. So why does everyone have all these different notions of love?

You see, the human form of love is conditioned. It wants something. In order for it to love, it must possess it. It must possess the person.

It must possess the object. It must possess this feeling, the job. It must possess the job in order to love it. It must possess its identity. It must possess it. And when you continue looking at the cultural love, you start to see all these cracks, all these seams that when you start looking at when people say love is love or all you need is love, that you see how it starts to fall apart when you actually look at how it requires you to be a certain way.

[7 : 02] If it doesn't, then it doesn't love you. How is that love? And then if you move into romantic love, this is the love that is so heightened, it's so put to the pedestal of what everyone deems love is.

And there's three forms of love in this. There's having multiple partners. There's just being true to yourself.

You can just be with whoever you want because you feel like this is your form of showing love.

There's also the dating form of love. When you find someone, and this person infatuates you.

Many of you could have been in a dating relationship, or you are in a dating relationship, and you feel like there's nothing that this person could do wrong. You love them so much that they couldn't do anything wrong, and you're almost tunnel-visioned, and you're willing to sacrifice anything for them and do anything you want for them.

And then there's the marriage love. And in marriage, you say these vows. You give these vows of love. You're saying, I will protect, I will honor, I will cherish you until death do us part.

[8 : 16] See, most of us have experienced this kind of love. And at the same time, there could be some people here saying, well, I've also experienced heartache. And many of us have experienced heartache. We've also, there could be people here watching, or sitting in this audience, that you've also experienced a broken marriage.

How can something that feels so perfect, at one moment say, this is the ultimate, this is the thing I will cherish most, and then at the next time, fall apart?

How is that? Why is that? You see, it comes back to the human problem of the corrupt heart, of it must be satisfied.

You see, in a dating relationship, when you're, when you're, when you're walking together in a dating relationship, if that person stops to satisfy you, or stops to give you that feeling that you have at the beginning, it normally ends.

That's when it becomes hard. And that's when a lot of people will just lay it to the side, and say they'll just love again. It's the same thing in marriages. A lot of marriages have, once one of the spouses stops almost fulfilling the other spouse, they start looking to the other way.

[9 : 35] And this is glorified, if you watch Netflix, you see it in many shows on Netflix, that there would be a couple walking together, enjoying life, and then all of a sudden, something happens, and then one of the spouses goes looking for love at somewhere else.

And then it glorifies the affair. Why is that? Why, why does the human, why does humanity glorify this love, but when you look closer at it, it's broken?

The love is broken. Why is that? Again, it comes down to, it's conditioned. It's all conditional love. Another good illustration, you see this at many weddings, is the wedding ring.

When you get married, you give a ring to your partner. You could hear officiants or ministers say sometimes that the ring symbolizes the ultimate love, because it's a circle.

It never breaks. It's continuous. And then you put it on your left finger, ring finger, and apparently, that's the, has a vein that goes all the way to your heart.

[10 : 41] You see that a lot at weddings. And that's a great illustration. I'm not dissing it or anything. It's a great illustration. But there's one problem with it when you, when you look closely at it.

You see the ring, it's made of metal. It's made of gold, silver. It could be silicone nowadays. That breaks. The ring can break.

It just, it can break. And that's the same thing with human love. Human love breaks. It's not infallible. It's not perfect because it always breaks or can break or becomes conditional or disoriented or jaded.

You see, when we look at God's love, when we look at the love of the Father, we see that when you read about it, the love of the Father has always been before creation.

It has been since the beginning in the Trinity that George talked about that the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father and through that they both love the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit loves them and it's almost like a continuous circle.

[11 : 44] But the thing that's so drastically different about God's love is that it's before time. It wasn't created. Human love is created. God's love is not.

It's perfect. It's ever being. It's always been. It always will be. It always will be perfect. Now, there's this common trend in some churches or some, you see, in the culture you hear about too that God is almost looked at as a grandfather, as a happy grandfather that would just tell you, like, just slap you on the hand when you do things wrong and stuff like that.

this is a very common belief of God that he's just a happy grandfather. He just shows up then he leaves at a family thing like a grandfather does. But that's not the case.

Now, some of you might be asking, well, Matt, you say there's a loving God, but what about hell? How could God be so loving if there's a thing called hell?

Why would he create hell? And there could be, there's these misconceptions that hell is this place of fire, this place of, this big lake of fire.

[12 : 55] So when you read about that in the Bible, when it says lake of fire, fire, it's not literally talking about this, like, burning place of eternal, eternal burning.

It's symbolism. Because it also says in the Bible that Jesus will return in fire and glory. God met, met Abraham in the bush.

You see, all these things that say fire, it's not, doesn't mean, it's not, it's a, it's a metaphor for something else. And hell, what hell is, is that God created free will out of love.

Because it wouldn't be loving if there was no free will. We would all just be puppets. It'd be like a parent who completely smothers their child and doesn't allow them to make any mistakes or anything like that.

We would all say that's unloving. See, what hell is, see, because God created free will, he allows us to have choices, to make decisions.

[13 : 59] And because of this, when, when God puts forward the chance of faith, to have faith in his son, if you turn away from him, that is your free will, that is your own decision, that is your own decision to be lost in yourself.

And because of this, God allows it. So on the day of judgment, God will allow you to continue in your free will of decision of being separated from God.

And what hell is, hell is you continuing in your own being, doing your own thing, but you'll have the knowledge that you are separated from God, which will be the worst thing possible. But it doesn't end there. But you see, everyone here, we're all corrupt beings. We're all corrupt because of the fall. And if you look at in verses 9 and 10 in 1 John chapter 4, it says, 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 have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

[15:14] See, God in his loving kindness created the world and created humans in his image. But the human heart rebelled against him because he created free will.

The human heart is corrupt and sinned. Because of this, God's wrath has to be appeased.

Everyone deserves death because sin is a separation of being with God.

It's completely different from his character, which is perfect. Now, some of you might be saying, why am I accountable for this? Why am I accountable for something I didn't do that something happened so long ago?

It's a funny question because when we look at our culture, it does the same thing to so many people. It holds everyone accountable. It demands atonement. It demands a sacrifice.

But it never provides a way out. It never gives forgiveness. But God, God's justice is perfect. God's love is perfect and he provided a way out.

[16:11] If you look again at verse 10, it says, in this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Propitiation means sacrifice, stood in our place. See, God sent his son into the world. Jesus Christ lived a perfect life.

He went to the cross willingly, lovingly, obeying the Father. And he died a death for us. The Father, full of righteous, the Father, full of righteous wrath against us, nevertheless, loved us so much that he sent his son.

The son, out of love, obeys the Father and goes to the cross. And the son, out of love for us, stands in our place and takes the death we deserved and redeems us.

That is the beautiful thing of God's love. That the human race was so long gone from God that there's no hope for them.

[17:17] God provides a way out. He sends his son for us because he loves us, because God is love and his perfect being, Jesus Christ comes. Now, if this is true, and if you want to see God's wrath, look at the cross.

If you want to see the love of God, look to the cross. Both these things are intertwined. You can't separate them. They're together. And in closing, if this is true, what must we do?

You see, John's gospel, he says it best. He puts it best in chapter 3, verse 16. He says, For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Friends, if you're watching here, if you're here present or if you're watching online and you do not know Jesus, now is the time to put your faith and trust in him because God is the ultimate essence of love.

He is love and it's been made manifest through Jesus Christ on the cross for us. There could be also some of you here who believe in Jesus but you feel like you fail constantly, constantly, over and over again and you think to yourself, like, how could God love me?

[18:36] How could God love such a sinner as myself? Well, you see, the Bible is full of instances where we see people struggle.

These people of great faith are struggling constantly and you see it in Romans 7. Paul is writing to the church in Rome and he's talking about his struggle, his indwelling sin where he can't, he can't stop sinning.

It drives him mad. He calls himself a wretch. He is wretched. But you see, when you've put your faith and trust in Jesus and God's love, you can shout for joy as Paul does in Romans, in Romans 8, verses 38 and 39 when he says, For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

See, God has revealed his love through Jesus Christ to save us out of his love. Another example I could give is, picture this, picture four friends on a canoe trip and they've been going, say they're in a Galquin Park, and they come up to a portage and they bring stuff over and normally at a portage one person will stay behind at the next lake and start filling the canoes to be efficient and while the other people go back and get all the rest of the stuff, the paddles and the bags and all that.

But let's say one of the friends couldn't swim and he's the one who's loading the canoes and it's deep there and he falls in by accident and he can't swim and he begins to drown.

[20 : 25] He begins to struggle to stay above and the three other friends come back. Now, what if one of the friends says, well, that's just his fate in life. That's just how it's always been.

That's just how survival of the fittest, he's clearly not fit enough to survive. The other friend gives examples and instructions on how to save himself, how to get out of the water, how to grab the canoe or how to pull himself to shore, but he can't do it.

And then the fourth friend jumps into the water and grabs him and pulls him to shore and saves him. Now, why do I give this example if I'm talking about God's love?

You see, they use this example, the first friend who gives the example of, oh, well, it's just his point in life to die right now. That is the atheistic worldview that it's just survival of the fittest, dog-eat-dog world.

The third friend who provides the instructions, that's all other religions. They give you instructions. The secular mindset gives you instructions on how to attain enlightenment or how to reach a God that's just far separated.

[21 : 41] But then there's the fourth friend. And that's the fourth friend who jumped in. You see, the Christian God, Jesus Christ, he came into the world to pull us out from ourselves, to pull us out from the sin that we are so entangled with that we can't save ourself.

As I read in John's epistle where it says, God's love is manifested. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.

You see, out of God's love, he sent his son for us. He pulls us out of our mess and provides us free, he provides us salvation. Now is the time to put your faith in Jesus.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, thank you thank you that you are the perfect, you are perfect love, that your being is love, that your love is manifested through Jesus Christ on the cross, the saving work.

Father, I just pray for all of us here that we would begin to understand how great that is, how great your love is.

[22 : 53] Help us, Lord, to also understand that how each thing is intertwined to show your perfect character. that you are the God of love, the only true form of love that never breaks.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.