

The Love of God

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[0:00] We do have some guests with us today and so as I want to do I'll explain. We do things a little differently here at Cascade Mountain Bible Church.

We preach early and we have a time for questions later if something comes up! John 3.16 which I think is probably the one passage of scripture you all turn to when you think of Christmas, right? But we're going through the Advent and today we're talking about the love of God. And so we're going to read John 3.16 through 18 and that's really the foundation of where we're going to start today.

Chapter 3.16 is very, very familiar. 17 and 18 not so much but they are just as poignant. So here we go.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son and whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

[1:23] Whoever believes in Him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

As we take a look at the love of God today, the key idea is this, that the love of God is for all people. Not just people who show up in church on Sunday morning, not just the people that are nice to their neighbors.

God's love is for all people. But we need to talk about love. One of my Bible dictionaries gave this definition.

Love is an unselfish, loyal, and benevolent intention and commitment towards another. I don't like that definition. I mean, it's fine as far as it goes, but I think there's a better definition.

Here's my definition of the love of God that we are talking about. Love is choosing someone to value them enough to sacrifice for them.

[2:46] If I love you, I have chosen you. And I've chosen you so that if you ever have a need or if there's anything I can provide or if you're in a situation, I am willing to sacrifice for you.

That is love. It is not an emotion. You've never heard me say this before, I know. Emotions are neither right nor wrong.

They just are. And oftentimes, emotions are liars. That's not love. Love is not wishy-washy.

It is not changeable. Love is making a choice. Where I choose you to the point to where I am willing to sacrifice for you.

All right? So let's talk about the love of God. Though we often get what love is wrong, God teaches us what real love is.

[3:59] In the epistle of 1 John 3, verse 16, we read, By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

God teaches us by his actions what love is. As human beings, we get this so wrong. Greek language has four different types of loves.

Three of them make it into the Bible. You've got agape love, which is kind of what we're talking about today. That is the willing to sacrifice for you love, the love of God. There's eros, which we're all familiar with.

That's erotic love. And there's phileos, which is the love of friends, right? The problem is we people, especially here today, we get that so wrong.

We confuse all three of them. We kind of smoosh them into one ball and just call it love. And it leads to all sorts of things that are wrong. I have no problem with gentlemen loving another gentleman in a non-eros way.

[5:19] I can love my friend as my friend and not confuse that with the love I have for my wife. See, we tend to get them all wrong.

That's how come we have same-sex marriages. That's how come we have gay rights. People don't understand there are different types of love.

The love that a man and a wife have is different than the love of brothers or sisters or friends. And the love of God is the love.

It's not perverse. It's not twisted. It's not in any way amorous. But the love of God is when he values us.

He chose us so highly that he was willing to sacrifice even the death on the cross. Though we get it wrong, God teaches us what real love is.

[6:27] In fact, the love that God demonstrated, there is no greater love than that. Not only does God demonstrate it, but when Christ was on the earth, he spoke about this in John chapter 15.

This is a very familiar passage. Verses 13 through 15 we read, Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what the master is doing. But I have called you friends. For all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you.

So it's that choosing and that willingness to sacrifice for others, that is the greatest form of love. But here's the thing.

It is true that there are some people who have laid down their lives for their friends, for their families. You know, you've got the father that rushes into the fire and drags the family out.

[7:39] You've got the mom who willingly puts herself in front of danger to spare the kids. You've got friends who will sacrifice themselves for their other friend.

And that, don't get me wrong, that's an important, and that is a great example of the type of love we're talking about. But I've got to be honest with you.

It is nothing compared to the love of God. No husband ever sacrificed himself more selflessly than Christ sacrificed himself for humanity.

No mother ever gave more for her children than Christ gave for humanity. And we've got to turn to Philippians chapter 2 to understand this.

Galatians, Ephesians. Philippians. It's in there somewhere. This is a very famous passage. It's the passage that talks about what it was like when Christ left glory.

[8:45] It says, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the very form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

That is the greatest love that has ever happened. That teaches us, God was in glory, and he saw us whom he had created, and all our failures, and all our shortcomings, and he loved us enough, not just to leave glory, but to take on humanity.

He who is in the very form of God, he was God in appearance, in person, in being. He was God. But the form of God wasn't something that he held on to, but he let it go, and he took upon himself humanity.

Do you know that today, Jesus Christ, in human form, sits at the hand of God, in glory. When Christ left glory to take on humanity, he didn't just take it on for a 30-year period, die, and then go back to the way he was.

He took it on for eternity. A billion years from today, if you're walking down the celestial streets of heaven, you will recognize a fellow human being, God incarnate, Jesus the Christ.

[10:34] He let go of that form and took upon us, and he did it solely for us. He chose us in love, becoming one of us, lived and died for us.

And as we take a look at that, there's no father, there's no mother, there's no sister or brother or sibling, there's no friend or relation, or even good Samaritan that has ever taken that big of a step to sacrifice for somebody else.

Because whoever is doing the sacrificing down here, is another human being. They're not stepping from Godhead into humanity to die.

They're just on this level doing it. And that's a great sacrifice, and it is no greater love has anybody than that. But that greatest of love is nothing compared to the love God had, stepping from glory into humanity into humanity and human history to die for us.

That is, that is the great truth of God's love for us. And he is worthy of worship. He is worthy of praise. He is worthy of all glory and honor.

[11:59] Because he loved us that much. You know, we read in John chapter 15 that maybe someone would lay down their life for a good person, you know.

But he laid it down for anyone, for everyone. I had two purposes in this message today. Number one is to hopefully put some handles on the love that God has for us so that we can step forward and worship of him.

Help us to understand how great his love is for each and every one of us so that we can give him the praise that he is glorious, gloriously deserves. But there's a second purpose.

You see, the love of God for humanity is good news. And good news is, oh, please don't yell at me when I mispronounce this in the Greek because none of us lived back then, all right?

It's something like eugelion? I don't know. Yeah, I knew that would get some. It's the root word.

What we translate good news is also the same thing that we get evangelism from.

[13:20] They're connected. The idea is good news is supposed to be told to people. Evangelize. Now, what does it mean to evangelize?

And there's, some people mean that all you're supposed to do is tell people the good news. You just tell them. What they do with it, that's up to them.

Had a lady on the phone this week wanting me to donate. I told her no. She wanted to argue with me. I said, no, I'm not donating. You know, but I said, did you understand I said no?

And you just repeat it and repeat it and repeat it, you know, but that's one way of evangelizing is you just say, this is the truth. This is the truth.

This is the truth. And people, him and haunt you, this is the truth. There's another way of evangelizing. And that is to present the good news in the best way for people to understand and engage with it.

[14:26] And that's not just telling people what the good news is. The book of James talks about your faith is no good if it doesn't have actions.

If you walk by someone and say, you know, be warm and well fed but you don't do anything to meet their physical needs, they're not going to listen.

We want to evangelize in such a way that people know that we care about them. There are people who will stand out there and just speak and they don't care about how people respond or how people listen.

Then you have those people that want to speak it in such a way that people will understand that they will engage. And that's what we want. We want the good news of God's love given to people in such a way that they can hear it.

Alright, here we go. If we're going to do that, we need to know a couple of things. And the first is that He loved us first.

[15:36] 1 John 4, verse 19. Great passage. Love it. 1 John 4, verse 19 says this. We love because He first loved us.

Any love that we have for anybody else, any love that we have for God starts because God first loved us. And you know what's amazing about that? You guys know what Romans 5, 5 through 8 talks about?

This is amazing. God first loved us. Oh, okay. Whatever. Until you read Romans 5, which says this. It should be verse 6. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person, one would dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in this.

[16:53] while we were sinners, Christ died for us. Do you get that? God didn't, God didn't, you know, He wasn't driving by and He said, look at that person.

What a great person they are. They are so sweet and kind and soft-spoken and gentle and helpful. I'm going to go die for that person. That's not what happened.

God didn't, God didn't go, you know, Pastor James really tries hard, you know, he kind of, but he's really working on it. Let me go die for him to help him out. That wasn't it at all.

God in glory looked upon us and He said, they have need. They have need. And I am going to love them even though they are sinners, even though they are rebels, even though they don't deserve it. I will love them. And He left glory and paid the sin price. verse 10 in Romans chapter 5 puts it this way.

[18:27] For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by His life.

God didn't just die for bums. He died for people who were enemies. Which brings us to the problem of good people.

You know, people think that they're good, right? Well, I'm not as bad as... Pick your favorite person that you're better than it. Anybody here think they're worse than Hitler?

Stop looking at me like that. You know, we all have people we think are better than them. You know? And especially when you go outside the church, people think, well, at least I'm not as bad as those hypocrites that claim to know Jesus but they always cut me off in traffic.

Or those dirty bums that always do, you know, I'm better than that. But there are no good people.

Good is a moral statement.

[19:45] You cannot have morals without absolutes. Something cannot be right or wrong if there's not right or wrong. And the only place you get right or wrong is, anybody know?

Starts with a G, ends with odd. God. God establishes what's right and wrong. God teaches us what's right and wrong. God is right.

All these people who think they're good, they're in rebellion against God. They don't exist. In fact, Psalms 14, Psalms 14 puts it in black and white.

What does he say there in Psalms 14? Psalms 22, too far. Psalms 14, verse 3.

They have all turned aside. Together they have been corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one. Romans 3, 10 through 12, how does it put it?

[20:47] It says this. As it is written, none is righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God.

All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. no one does good, not even you, not even me.

But here's the thing. While we were yet sinners, while we were enemies of God, while we were still in the category of not good, God chose us to love us and to sacrifice for us to meet our needs.

And not just us, but what does it say? For God so loved the rich people who would donate to the church and keep the lights on.

Is that what it says? Not specifically. God loved the humble people who would be willing to submit to his, no.

[22:02] God loved the bold who'd go out there and present the gospel with fearless courage. No. No. for God so loved the world that he sent his son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

It doesn't matter how courageous or how cowardly. It doesn't matter how rich or how poor. It doesn't matter how smart or dense.

God chose to love you just as you are. While we were enemies Christ died for us.

The good news of God's love is that he chose us before we ever chose him. He chose to love all.

God's love is that God loves the good news. We need to share the good news of Christ.

[23:20] If someone hadn't shared the good news of Jesus with you, where would you be today? If someone hadn't told you that God loves you despite your shallow selfishness, forgiveness, if somebody hadn't come to you and

said, Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin and offers you forgiveness, despite the fact that you're still going to struggle and sin, where would you be?

You see, the love of God is worthy of us giving him praise for it. And the love of God is so powerful, we need to share it with anyone and everyone.

It is our calling. I want to wrap up, every day should be a day of worship of the God who loves us.

When you get up in the morning, it should be a day of worship, not just Sunday.

Every day should be a day of worship. You know, when we should worship God, I had a great worship day yesterday in the morning. I was hiking up Strongberg.

The sun was beautiful, the snow was on all the trees, it was glorious, I had a great day of worship.

Do you know what another good day of worship is? Before I went on the hike, I realized that the furnace had burnt up and I had to fix it.

[24:51] That's a great day to praise the Lord. You know, when you've got your hot cup, whatever it is, and you're about to sit down and enjoy it, and you slip because you spilled some and you splash it all over your brand new carpet, that's a great day to love and worship the Lord because His love, He's choosing you to meet your needs before you ever thought of Him.

We love Him because He first loved us. God, and in addition to that, we who know the good news of God, let us be evangelistic in our daily lives.

What a blessing is it for you to be saved? I want you to stop for just a moment and remember the last time where you brought your sin before God.

Forgive me, Lord. Do you remember what God did? He got His big Holy Bible and shook it at you, right? That's not what God did.

He forgave us. God didn't come down in exasperation, kick you around for a while, say, why can't you be a better Christian? That's not what God does.

[26:23] When we come before Him, He mercifully forgives us and welcomes us back. He calls us to lead a life which honors Him. But we are forgiven.

What a blessing is that. How many times have you broken down in tears because God has forgiven you? In joy and celebration because a miserable wretch like you was forgiven by a great and holy God.

God, what a blessing that would be for those who we love. Let us be evangelistic in sharing the good news.

Let's not be the type of evangelist that stands on the sidelines with a big Bible and just pounds it at people. But let us be the type of evangelist that looks at people and sees who they are and tries to reach them with the good news of Jesus Christ.

That's what God did for us. Let us do that for Him. Let's pray. Father, your God is... ..