

To Him Who Loves Us

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[0 : 0 0] please turn with me this morning to revelation chapter 1 and verse 5 to what are some of the most wonderful words in the whole of the bible but it says of our lord to him who loves us to him who loves us heavenly father we bow in your presence may your word be our rule your spirit our teacher and your greater glory our supreme concern through jesus christ our lord amen do you feel loved it was hard to feel loved at times when during the pandemic you couldn't shake anyone's hand you couldn't see them smile at you you couldn't enjoy a hearty embrace in fact the opposite was often true people engaged in sidestepping and we engaged in the literally soul-destroying practicing of what's called social distancing god made us for intimacy with one another but for our own health and the health of others we remained aloof now perhaps intellectually today you know that you are loved but you're not feeling it your your sense of self-worth has suffered you become introspective afraid morbid maybe it will take you many years to feel loved again wide wide wide as the oceans high as the heavens above deep deep as the deepest sea is my savior's love we were taught this as children perhaps it was one of the first songs we were taught remember the voices of those who taught it to you most of whom now are in heaven where there's no sea and no sky i remember them i can see their faces alan newell christina gunn katherine sutherland mary mcdonald they're all with their savior remember their voices when they taught this song to you and ask yourself do i still believe what they taught me all those years ago do i still believe that jesus loves me though so many years may have passed since you first learned this song do you still feel loved by jesus i our sense of self-worth might have suffered through this pandemic but to believe that jesus loves you give security and meaning a sense of worth in a worthless age yes you may become introspective and afraid and rather morbid but to feel the love of jesus gives you eyes which look out and a heart which is joyful there are a few more encouraging verses in the bible than this in revelation 1 verse 5 where in the context of praising god as father son and holy spirit john writes to him who loves us there's another song we learned as children jesus loves me this i know for the bible tells me so here it is in black and white in revelation 1 verse 5 jesus loves you he loves you as much now as he ever has or ever will

he loves you with all the passion and inventiveness of which he is capable supposing even your love for him has grown cold he loves you still he will never stop loving you even when your love for him is in danger of being snuffed out by this world's pressures and pandemics and by your own doubts and your own fears and your own weaknesses let me this morning briefly expand on christ's love for you under three headings the definition of jesus love the duration of jesus love the dimensions of jesus love my aim is your encouragement my aim is to stir your first love for jesus which by your own admission you've lost to stir again in your heart the joy you once experienced in the gospel of his grace to return to him first of all then jesus definition of love jesus definition of love now the writers of the new testament had different words they could use for love the love of a man for his wife eros the love of friends for one another philia the love of empathy storge and the unconditional love of god agape it's the last of these john chooses to use here in revelation 1 verse 5 that agape love which is most usually reserved for how god loves us now the people of the ancient world were no less interested in loving others and being loved by others than we are just like eskimos have hundreds of different words for snow so in greek they had four words for love the most powerful of which is the one they choose to use here agape in english we might say to someone there are no words to describe how much i love you such a thing the writers of the new testament could not say for agape was the highest love imaginable so high we might say of it but though we may describe it we cannot define it other than to say it is the unconditional undeserved love of god john who wrote revelation also wrote the gospel which bears his name and the letters of first second and third john john plums deeper into the ocean of the love of christ for us than any other and he tells us first of all that god is love love isn't something god does demonstrates pretends to be love is something he is it is not so much an attribute of god it is his essence he does not possess the option not to love when you think of god you are not to think of the detachment of the gods of the greeks zeus and so on you're not to think of the warlike ferocity of the gods of the norse odin and thor you are not to think of the nebulous impersonality and nothingness of the new age you are not to think of the harsh unfeeling judgmentalism of other world religions you are to think of god as love the second thing john tells us

is that god loves himself god loves himself john's writings reveal the one god exists as father son and holy spirit three persons who love one another infinitely the father loves the son and the son loves the spirit that is within the trinity the holy trinity an unbreakable nexus of agape the mutual adoration and affection of father son and holy spirit this is his essence that god has always and will always love himself and we're told here this is amazing that that agape which we're told jesus has for us that love finds its genesis and its closest description in how he as jesus is loved by the father and by the spirit it is love of the same quality yes even of the same quantity john tells us thirdly that god loves his world he loves it in all its variety in all its rebellion in all its vastness he tells us in the most famous verse in the bible john 3 16 that it's his love for the world which led him to give his one and only son so that whoever should believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life as we'll see in a moment agape is not a love which is deserved especially when it comes to god's love for us but this at least is true even if it doesn't seem like it to us god loves his world and then fourthly god loves his people he loves his people with all the quality and quantity of agape with which god the father loves god the son loves god the spirit but the love of god he has for himself enfolds his people includes his people incorporates them into the into the nexus of his inner trinitarian love his love for you is not so much the overflow of the infinite love of god as it is the embrace of the infinite love of god for his people weak pathetic and sinful though we may be this is the love which john tells us in revelation 1 verse 5

Jesus loves us with it is not fluffy it is not meaningless it is not multi-directional it is not aimless it is not unjust it is not unfair greater love cannot be described or imagined wide wide as the ocean high as the heavens above deep deep as the deep blue sea is my savior's love the more we delve into the thought world of the bible the more we learn about god the more wonderful the height the depth the width and the breadth of the love of jesus for us becomes as wide as god himself as deep as his infinite and eternal being many of us as parents read to our children the wonderful illustrated book guess how much i love you wonderful book story revolves around two hares that's rabbits who find ever greater ways to describe their love for each other guess how much i love you and in revelation 1 verse 5 the apostle john who's often called the apostle of love is speaking on behalf of the risen lord jesus the jesus who is today and he's asking his church and he's asking you as a christian guess how much i love you guess how much i love you what feelings of stability and security the love of christ brings there may be hundreds of eskimo words for snow and i don't know one of them but this word agape is beyond all human definition that's how much jesus loves you today second jesus duration of love the duration of jesus love one of the reasons that this verse is so marvelous is because it brings the love of jesus for us into the present tense the apostle paul said of christ he loved me he gave himself for me and that's the most wonderful thing to know that that sacrifice on the cross to take away my sins was the demonstration of his love for me again in john 13 1 we saw this last week having loved his own who were in the world he now showed them the full extent of his love how wonderful a thing it is to think of the love jesus had for his disciples and how he demonstrated the full extent of that love in his self giving death on the cross for them it is essential that we understand jesus loved us and it was his love for us that led him to the passion of calvary that should go without saying we all believe that right and yet it is one almighty step forward when we say of christ not only did he love us but he loves us still he loved us in the past he'll love us in the future and he loves us now it is of little comfort to me to know that my wife once loved me it is of greater comfort to me that my wife loves me now greater comfort and greater surprise in my case here's the astonishing truth of revelation one verse five jesus loves

you as much now as he did the day he died for you on the cross he loves you as much now as the day he died for you on the cross it's who he is it's his nature to continue to love us he can no sooner stop loving us than he can stop being jesus furthermore it's not just in his nature to choose to love us he voluntarily continually willfully chooses to love us he would not have it any other way than this yesterday today and forever jesus christ loves us that same self-giving attitude he had when he went to the cross still possesses him that same furious longing for us that same inextinguishable passion for us the famous gaither hymn which a previous generation listened to goes like this when he was on the cross i was on his mind when he was on the cross i was on his mind that's true that even though jesus was suffering and dying on the cross the nails being driven into both of his hands by the roman executioners he loved you and you were on his mind but what was true 2000 years ago in judea in a far off country is still true today in downtown glasgow in 2021 ad he is no longer seated on the throne on a cross rather he is seated on the throne you are still front and center of his love you're still in his mind his hand rising in blessing blessing and benediction upon you when jesus died on the cross he cried out it is finished but he certainly was not referring to his love for us it goes on and on and on little admission to you i'm older than i look over 45 years since i first sung that song as a child wide wide as the ocean high as the heavens above deep deep as the deepest sea it's my savior's love almost half a century thing is he loved me then and though i struggled to believe it he loves me now and though i go on to live for another hundred years as unlikely as that may be he'll love me then also the jesus who loved you when you were a child he still loves you he will never stop loving you no never and when we reach the last day of our lives as i have watched many from our fellowship doing lying insensibly upon our beds waiting for the end no one else can communicate with us it is then jesus shall sit beside us stroke our hair and read us the children's story again as he's done to us hundreds of times before guess how much i love you the sea is always there that's why whenever i've got a big decision to make in life or a big problem to deal with i go sit

[18 : 51] beside the sea it's been a constant companion right it was there before we were born it'll be there after we die perhaps you're like me in this also one day the sea will dry up and disappear and all that we had ever known will be no longer sun will no longer shine in the sky the universe will cease to exist but the love of jesus will go on and on never lessening in its intensity for us never dulling in its brightness the same love yesterday today and forever ah we're sorry for ourselves today are we not we're engaged in some kind of pity party today we're scared to breathe lest we inhale death from another we need to know this jesus doesn't love the person you wish you were jesus doesn't love the person you pretend to others to be jesus loves the real you the person you are with all your fears and your phobias and your weaknesses the duration of jesus love and then last the dimension of jesus love the dimensions of the love of jesus now you will know that the book of revelation is primarily a letter in fact it's not just one letter it's it's letters written to seven churches jesus wrote these seven letters to seven churches in asia minor today's turkey these churches are ephesus and smyrna and pergamum and thyatira and sardis and philadelphia and ludusia seven churches so in the first instance it is these christians in these seven churches jesus loves those first century christians worshipping in and making up those seven churches well you say to me that's fine i only ever hear good things about the early church these were all very faithful christians surely they were worthy of the love of christ really have you read these individual letters jesus sent to these churches in revelation 2 3 there were many good things about the church in ephesus except this it was all one big facade they were going through the motion of being christians but they had entirely lost their first love the church in smyrna was poor troubled and insignificant the church in pergamum was just plain immoral and dirty the church in thyatira was plagued by false teaching the church in sardis had a reputation for being lively and vibrant and cool the hippest and trendiest place to be but it was spiritually dead the church in philadelphia was weak in danger of giving up the church in ludicis was lukewarm and blind these are the early churches to which jesus writes his letters and says i love you do you think that any of them were faithful enough to deserve christ's love and yet here in

revelation 1 verse 5 look at it you can see it for yourself john tells them jesus loves you with all the definition and due ability of his passion he doesn't love you because you're worth loving many of the christians who are making up these seven churches are desperately unfaithful to jesus some have wandered away from both orthodox belief and orthodox practice some are backslidden others are hypocrites but he loves them these are the dimensions of the love of christ he loves the unlovable and those who do not and will not love him back many have supposed i think rightly that the seven churches of revelation are a cross section of the church in all ages in other words today you have the same problems as you did all the way back then we have churches in scotland today which deny the truth and promote immorality we have churches which are back slidden and whose love has grown cold we have churches which are hypocritical jesus says i still love my church i'm not sure it's an aberdonian word it's probably just a word but my father used his aberdonian accent to describe our family trait he said of the dows were thrown people thrown people good word thrown to be thrown is to be immovably stubborn to be unwilling to listen to reason but to carry on regardless i've often thought as i've read the letters the seven letters jesus wrote to these churches in asia in revelation that his love is thrown it is immovably stubborn that's a lovely description of the love of jesus for his church and for you his love is thrown his love is thrown for his church his love is thrown for you you might be in ephesian today your religion is a facade hiding a heart which is no longer in it you might be you might be a smirning you might be emotionally weak spiritually poor insignificant you might be from pergamum secretly you might be engaging in hidden immoralities of which no one else knows anything but you're deeply ashamed you might be a thyatine your theology might be all over the place you might be from sardis you look great on the outside oh boy do you look the proper proper gentleman proper christian but inside you are horribly horribly backslidden you might be a philadelphian you are deeply troubled today you're most terribly weak you might be a laodicean today you're apathetic your faith has grown kind of cold you can take it leave it jesus still loves you i know a girl who used to come to this church not so long ago she was a bright christian really bright solid dependable she prayed beautifully was at the very heart of our youth fellowship she moved away and i recently learned that she had fallen away from her faith in christ oh i'm sure i'm sure she once loved

jesus but she doesn't know does she not realize and understand that though she may no longer love jesus he still loves her that though she's run far away from him he still loves her as much as he always has maybe your attachment to jesus has grown guy thin certainly during this pandemic the love of many has grown cold and yours is growing cold also ah but jesus loves you as much now as he ever has his love for you is thrown even if yours for him is pathetic maybe you're tired and you've grown anxious and exhausted and there's nothing you can give to jesus anymore but think about it think about it for a second jesus never loved you for what you could give him anyway he loved you because it's in his nature to love don't give up though you may be holding on by your your fingertips don't give up wide wide is the ocean high as the heavens above deep as the deepest sea is my savior's love who is this jesus who loves you well we're told earlier he is the faithful witness he is the firstborn from the dead the ruler of the kings of the earth he loves you jesus of whom we're told later in the verse the one who has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom and preached to his god and father we could be loved by no greater than the jesus whose glory is infinite and whose grace toward us in the gospel is inexhaustible this is the one who has set his love upon you you the real you not the person that in your best moments you want to be but the person who really is the mishmash of all these different seven churches rolled into one and he calls you today to return to him i wonder sometimes why our young friend who was once a member of this church and so faithful to christ won't come back to jesus why she stays away could it be that she's enjoying life without jesus maybe could it be that she doesn't really understand that the jesus who was calling her to return to him isn't going to judge her but embrace her probably she has lost her love for jesus because she forgot how much jesus loves her and in forgetting that upward security that she has in christ's love for her she is now looking for that security in the approval of other people for her what in the fulfillment her career may present her with there but for the grace of god go any of us maybe you're just one step away from where she is now what then is your greatest need at this very moment at this very moment maybe this is your first time in this church maybe it's your millionth time in this church what is your greatest need my greatest need right now listen to john once more to him who loves us it is to return to the all embracing love of jesus he does not do social distancing he waits for you with all

the intimacy of who he has always been and who he will always be you might be close to falling off the map but jesus with that great agape love wants to pull you back and if this isn't enough for you remember those voices who so lovingly taught you the words of the hymn when you were a child the one i learned 45 years ago wide wide as the ocean high as the heavens above deep deep as the deep blue sea is my savior's love know that love love love believe that love feel that love for jesus has always does today and will always love his own let us pray love love love our loving god father son and holy spirit we worship and praise you for who you are forgive us oh lord for our harsh thoughts of you for constructing an idol of our own imagination in our minds god rather like the greek deities of zeus or the nordic deities of thor or the pathetic impersonalized gods of the new age movement or the harsh unloving and unmerciful gods of other religions rather than taking you at your word oh lord the word that says god is love this is how we know god loves us he has sent his one only son to die for us in repentance and in faith oh lord we ask that you would help us to return to you turning away from all those things we know to be wrong the self sufficiency and selfishness claiming the great promises of the gospel come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest we ask these things in Jesus amen amen