

The of Christ: The Satisfaction of God

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to another Sermon on the Web from St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church in Vancouver, Canada. You are free to use this mp3 audio file and to redistribute it to others without alteration and without charge. After the sermon, listen for more information about St.

John's Shaughnessy Church and the St. John's website. The following message is from the November 5, 2000 service at St. John's Shaughnessy. The Reverend David Short delivered his message from the book of 1 John, the fourth chapter, verses 7 to 12. The title of the message is The Cross of Christ, The Satisfaction of God.

God our Father, as we turn to your word now, we pray that you would give us childlike humility, that we may believe what you say and love what you love. For we pray in your name. Amen.

Please sit down. As the youth group heads off for their lesson, I wonder if you would open your Bibles to 1 John chapter 4 on page 223. As you're doing that, let me say, while I was interviewing Rita at the 9 o'clock service, as though someone had rehearsed this, one of the three-year-olds took a hold of this plant of flowers and pulled it over. It was heading towards a group of children and one of the fathers grabbed it and saved the day. It was one of those moments where all the children suddenly listened to Mrs. Baldwin out the front and she talked about how she uses these things in her lessons. So if I see anyone falling asleep, I'm going to get Felix to come over and push this. No, no, no. Well, we have survived another annual celebration of ghouls and ghosts and all things evil in Halloween. I've said this before, but in Australia we don't celebrate Halloween and each year I learn something new. As the children came to the door this year, it was my turn to hand out the candy and it's clear that the parents had spent a great deal of energy and money on the costumes. There was a heavy Harry Potter theme and all sorts of frightening combinations. But the one designed to be most frightening was two little boys who were dressed as Anglican clergy. Now I'm not sure what to do with that, although it is clear that we clergy need to have a serious image makeover. But I don't think that should be too difficult to you, especially considering that the church has almost completely successfully given God a makeover over the last two centuries.

[3 : 2 2] century. Very understandable and a very fashionable makeover. But I think it's understandable because it's very difficult to believe in a God of power and a God of love at the end of the 20th century. I mean the century was one of unparalleled and unmitigated personal misery, of tyranny and torture and tragedy, of genocide and holocaust, of poverty and environmental abuse. And I think partly in response to that there has been an avalanche of unbelief in the church. And the main theological project in the 20th century of the western mainline denominations has been to renovate God's image through a scissors and paste job on the scriptures. The intent has been to remove from God all those things that we would consider negative. So we replace his wrath with disapproval and we replace his love with tolerance. And the idea is to tailor make a God who will not make any of us feel uncomfortable, who we would welcome at any polite dinner table conversation. The problem is that when the

Christian faith comes to suffering and the love of God, the Bible does not offer us neat, tidy and easy answers.

Instead it offers us the Son of God nailed to a cross, dying in pain and in our place. And you see the cross is not just the place of great redemption, the cross is the place of great revelation.

It's not just the place of our hope and forgiveness, it is the lens through which we see and understand God and through which we see and understand life and this world. And that is why as we turn to this remarkable letter of 1 John, the Apostle tells us two things so simple and so complete that they reveal to us God more deeply than we can imagine. In chapter 1 the Apostle tells us that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

That is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a God of indescribable holiness and righteousness and purity and beauty.

[5 : 54] He is unsullied by mixed motives and confusion. He is the source of light and truth. I've said before you know that the one word used in the Scriptures more than any other to describe God is the word holy.

And because God is light, he delights to share himself and reveal himself with us. And when he does, his revelation isn't just revelation, it is good revelation.

Just in case you think that's a bit theoretical and abstract, the very next verse after he said that, the Apostle says what that means is that you cannot have fellowship with God and live disobedient lives. God is light.

But the second claim is that God is love. And that brings us to our passage in chapter 4. You know the Apostle speaks about love more than any other New Testament writer.

It's quite possible he thought we might need help in this area. And so he continually and consistently urges us to love one another. He says that's what it means to be a child of God. He says if you claim to have fellowship with God, you will love those people around you.

[7 : 00] Look at verse 7 and 8. Beloved, let's love one another. Love is of God. I mean he's the source of it. And he who loves is born of God and knows God.

He who does not love does not know for God is love. God is love. Love is not one of God's qualities amongst many. Love goes right to the essence and core of who God is by nature.

So everything God does is loving. Every action, every word, every thought, his mercy, his grace, his purity are all motivated by love.

And again this is the furthest thing from being academic and theoretical. The Apostle tells us we talk about love endlessly and we think we ourselves are experts on the topic.

But in reality he says we don't have a clue. Look at verse 9. He says in this the love of God was made manifest among us.

[8 : 03] That God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. Yes he says we all experience love from one degree to another but apart from the death of Jesus Christ we would never know what love is.

God himself defines what love is. You won't find the definition of love in a dictionary says John. You will find it at Calvary. God's love is active and visible.

God's love does not. He doesn't love us in return for our love. He doesn't meet us halfway. He doesn't wait for us to begin liking him. It is when we are under the sentence of death.

He sent his son to die in our place. His love is conspicuous and unique and it has been publicly manifested in a place of violence and bloodshed for those whom did not love God.

But it is when we come to verse 10 that we are taken the deepest. Listen to these words. In this is love. Here is the definition. In this is love.

[9 : 04] Not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the expiation for our sins. The word expiation ought to be translated propitiation.

I am going to explain that. Expiation is impersonal term. You expiate sins. Propitiation is a personal term. When someone has been wronged and they are rightly angry and hurt, to propitiate them means to make some sort of offering to turn away their anger.

It is the word used throughout the Bible to describe averting God's wrath by a sacrifice. If you are an Anglican you will be used to this word. Every time we have a communion service we read, If anyone sins we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous and he is the propitiation for our sins.

If you are in a boring sermon and trolling through the articles at the end you will know that article 31 speaks of Jesus' death as that perfect propitiation.

Those of you who are smiling should put your prayer books away. The problem is that many of us are frightened of this word, even some of the Bible translators, because it has pagan associations.

[10 : 17] The word was used in pagan religions. When the gods flare up in anger at some trivial and unpredictable moment they demand that their anger be propitiated. And pagan religion is basically celestial commerce, where you manage and manipulate the God by cunning bribery.

Of course the God of the Bible is not like that. He is not some bad tempered child. And therefore it comes as a surprise to many people that the idea of propitiation runs both through the Old Testament and through the New Testament.

That the idea of averting God's wrath by an offering takes us to the heart of God's purposes for us, to the heart of the sacrifice and the death of Jesus. Do you know this very word is used in the Old Testament when the priest offers a sacrifice for his own sins.

He would go inside the court and he would take the animal and he would lay his hands on the living animal and confess his sins, transferring his sins to that animal. And when the animal was killed God's anger, God's wrath was propitiated.

That's what we read. But our difficulty with this is that our anger is almost always selfish and petulant and spiteful. At least mine is.

[11 : 32] And we do our best to keep it under control but it's very close to the surface and at the slightest provocation it bursts forward, wreaking destruction and havoc with those unlucky enough to be close to us.

And it's very difficult, next to impossible for us to imagine an anger that is pure and righteous and holy. But God is light. And wrath, the wrath of God, is nothing other than God's holy love confronted with evil.

He recoils from sin. Wrath is, if you like, the reverse side of his holy love. He takes us deadly seriously and where there is sin there will be wrath. It is his settled opposition to all that is not right. And it reveals to us a God who is concerned with what is good and pure and true and right. And the Bible could not be clearer. Both Old and New Testament testify to the terrifying reality of God's wrath.

If you remove the wrath of God from God, you are no longer talking about the God of the Bible. And you probably know that there are two popular ways today of taking God's wrath away from Him.

[12 : 39] The first is to say this. Ok, the Old Testament does talk about the wrath of God over 500 times. Yes, it is kindled and it is fierce. But that is the God of the Old Testament some say.

The God of the New Testament is different. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a God of love and a God of tenderness. And you may be interested to know that this is not a new idea. It was first spouted by a fellow called Marcion in 140 AD.

There was quite a lot about the Bible that Marcion did not like at all. He didn't like any reference to the Jews. He took out the Old Testament. Didn't like the wrath of God. Took out those references. Didn't like the virgin birth. Didn't like the resurrection. So he literally took a knife and cut those sections out. And he invented a mutilated Christianity.

It's called the Marcionite heresy and it rears its head from time to time. But you need a special kind of myopia to take this view. You have to ignore the fact that the God of the Old Testament is a God of tender mercy and compassion.

[13 : 46] You know, right back in the second book of the Bible in the book of Exodus. When God reveals himself to Moses at Mount Sinai before the people go into the land. God says about himself this.

The Lord, the Lord. A God merciful and gracious. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. And you also have to ignore the fact that the one person in the scriptures who speaks more clearly and more frequently about the reality of judgment than anyone else.

Is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The other popular way to eradicate God's wrath is to say, Wrath is an impersonal term.

It's a kind of Christian karma which explains why bad things happen in the world. But the Bible makes clear that the anger of God is deeply personal. And he is active throughout his creation. Rather than being a blind and personal force, the wrath of God is his love and his light confronted with evil. The idea that God should not or cannot be angry is neither Christian nor biblical.

[14 : 54] Rather it is making God again in our own image. A pale reflection of our fears. And it violates the biblical revelation. It empties the apostolic gospel.

It scoffs at God's holiness. But the biggest thing it does is it emasculates the love of God in the cross. You see that is why the fact that God is love is so important.

God is not by nature wrathful. God is by nature love. Wrath is not the first word nor the last word about God. In fact the book of Isaiah describes God's wrath as his strange work.

His alien work. It is only because it has been aroused by our sin. And that is why the cross is at the heart of our understanding of God. Because the cross is the perfect combination of the love of God for us.

As well as God's opposition to all that's wrong and all that's evil. You see the cross is not just another sacrifice. As Jesus dies, he takes the wrath of God to himself.

[15 : 58] Jesus is our propitiation. Think about it this way. The problem with our guilt is not so much our subjective feelings of guilt, even though they're real.

The problem is those things that we have ever done that have aroused God's wrath. And our disobedience, the Bible teaches us, creates a distance between us and God. But the real obstacle between us and God is not our feelings about God, but his towards us.

Yes, we are estranged from God, but God is estranged from us. And here is the miracle of God's love. It is God who provides the way so that his wrath might be satisfied and so that you and I might come back into friendship and fellowship and reconciliation and communion with him.

And God doesn't just reach out and find some innocent third party bystander and sacrifice him. In the person of Jesus Christ, God was in Christ on the cross, reconciling the world to himself.

Do you remember in the Old Testament when Elijah stood against the prophets of Baal? And Elijah set up an offering, a bull on wood on a stone altar.

[17 : 16] And he called and he bucketed it with water, gallons and gallons and gallons of water and gathered in a trench round about. And when Elijah called upon God to send down fire from heaven, the fire came down and utterly consumed, not just the offering, not just the wood, but the rocks and the dust and the water in the trench.

And as Jesus dies on the cross and the fire of God's wrath comes down upon him, not only is the offering consumed, but the offering consumes the wrath of God.

And God's wrath is exhausted in Jesus Christ. In this is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins.

That is why you see the cross reveals the light of God and the love of God. That is where steadfast love and faithfulness meet. That is where righteousness and peace kiss each other. You know, in Australia every summer, the greatest danger comes from bushfires.

There's only a couple of things you can do when a bushfire comes. And there is a famous story of a couple of families who were living in the bush and they got news that a fire was coming through and they couldn't get out.

[18 : 35] The roads were blocked off. So they did the only thing that you could do. They got a field and they burned it. They completely burned the field to the ground.

And when the bushfire came, they went into the middle of the field and huddled together. And the fire, of course, passed them by because the field had already been consumed and burned.

And so it is for us. There is one safe place for us against the wrath of God. And it is the only place where God's wrath has already burned and been exhausted.

And it is the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus is our propitiation. Praise God. The wrath of God has been averted from us. And what that means is that if you trust in Jesus' death, you are utterly, utterly, utterly forgiven.

He remembers our sins no more. We have peace with God. There is now no condemnation. This is the wonder of God's love.

[19 : 40] He takes what we deserve. He gives us what we don't deserve. He suffers the wrath of God so that now there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God.

No weakness, no sin, no depression, no guilt. Nothing in the past, nothing in the future, nothing above, nothing below. Not life, not death itself. And the Christian life is a daily journey where we struggle to more deeply understand the utter security and unconditionality of God's love for us.

And as we live in that, we are able to love one another. And what this passage is teaching us this morning is that the source and spring of that love is the cross of Jesus Christ.

If you wonder whether God really loves you, don't look around you in your life, says the Bible, although that will teach you some. Ultimately, you and I need to look at the cross of Jesus Christ. Go there and see what God did for you and why and be gripped by his love. Or if you are finding it difficult to love that difficult person who doesn't understand you, again we are to go to the cross of Jesus Christ and see what he has done.

[20 : 55] And there as we look at the cross we can see what love is. It is giving ourselves for the spiritual good of the other person. It is often, mostly, usually costly, seeking the other's best.

And this morning as we come to the communion table and as we remember the death of Jesus for us, let us lift up our hearts to the God who is love. And let us give him thanks and praise and

adoration for what he has done.

And be gripped by his love again. Amen. This MP3 sermon along with many others is available from the St. John's Shaughnessy website.

www.stjohns.org That address is www.stjohns.org On the website, you will also find information about ministries, worship services and special events at St. John's Shaughnessy.

We hope that this sermon on the web has helped you. And that you will share it with others. Thank you, everyone. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much, Will.

[22 : 23] Appreciate it. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for being here. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you to God. Yes, I hope you. Thank you very much. You, thank you, ■ God. And I hope you appreciate it.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Only one of those people came with life. That was pretty happy.

I hope you enjoy this room. We'll ride next. Take a time. You showed you every day than the rest.