

Love One Another

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[0 : 00] and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores, and it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angel into Abram's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. He cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abram said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receive its good things and likewise Lazarus evil things. And now he is comforted and thou art tormented.

Besides all this, between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.

[1 : 17] Then he said, I pray thee therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

And Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. He said, Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

He said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. He said, Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. The confession of, I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not me, being of one substance, the only being for our salvation.

came down from heaven, and was indombed by the holy gift of the virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified, and was crucified for us, and the Holy Spirit, he died in the sky.

[3 : 00] And the third day he rose again, and got into the scripture, and was sent into heaven, and sit upon the right hand of God, and he shall come again with glory, which the judge broke the quake in the dead, who's feeling felt that way.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the keeper of life, who could lead us from the Father and the Son, who is the Father and the Son together, who is worshiped and glorified, who's feeling that our promise.

And I believe in one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church, I am only one baptism, for the remission of sin, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the light of the world to come.

Amen. Our God, as we turn our hearts and thoughts to your word, we ask that you will open our hearts to receive that word, and open that word to the understanding of our minds and hearts.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[4 : 12] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. and you won't be able to figure out where I am if supposing you might be able to.

It's chapter 4 of the first epistle of John and it's on page 223 in the New Testament section of the Pew Bibles.

And the text that I want to put before you is that first line in the passage which reads, Beloved, let us love one another.

And I suppose it is in that spirit that the opening exhortation of morning prayer with which you are all so familiar takes place when the minister stands up and says, Dearly beloved brethren, that doesn't

sound very real sometimes and perhaps it isn't very real, not nearly as real as it needs to be. But certainly the exhortation which is here, Beloved, let us love one another. Were I to say that and no more, it might precipitate some activity among us which could go on at least for today as we sought to find ways to love one another.

[6 : 01] What does it mean when it says this? My own feeling about it is that lots of people come to church because they want to be loved.

And I don't know whether they go home sensing that they have been or are, but very frequently people tell me that they come to church but they don't really feel they belong. They come to church but find themselves alienated because there's people they don't know or there's new people or there's old people or there's young people or whatever there may be and they feel somehow that they're not included.

And that's not only true perhaps of this experience on a Sunday morning, but it may be more widely true of our whole experience of life that we haven't found a place where we are genuinely loved, where there is the reality of Beloved, love one another.

And trying to do this is hard work because there are so many things that make us unlovable, make us a threat to one another, make us seem standoffish and distant to one another.

[7 : 33] How do those barriers get broken down so that there can be some practical expression of loving one another? I know and I confess this that one of my problems is that I love to be loved and that's a bit like our dog, he does too, or she does, but that is less than what's meant here.

And the difficulty for me in a congregation like this is that I am delighted when I think I'm loved and I'm desolate when I sense I'm not loved.

And so I go up and down like a yo-yo in relationship to people. And if I'm loved, then I become even in a worse state because I wonder, well, can I go on being loved or what do I have to do in order to go on being loved?

And what will I ever do if the people who have expressed their love for me suddenly withdraw it and I find myself desolate and alone and just overcome by a sense of alienation because people whom I thought loved me in fact have withdrawn that love?

Can I risk being rejected? Or is it better to keep all love relationships on a kind of cash basis? You pay for what you get and then you go your way and you don't expect any more than that.

[9 : 21] Well, I think that lots of us are like that in our hearts, that we very much need to be loved. And we would be very grateful if the church could provide us with that in some way or other.

But it doesn't do it. And so what I want just to do briefly is to unpack this passage for you a little bit. Now, have you ever seen at the circus one of these Volkswagens drive in and 22 clowns get out of one little Volkswagen bug?

Well, this passage tends to be a little bit like that. It is so packed full of meaning and full of ideas and concepts and exhortations and statements that it's very difficult to come to grips with it.

It's lovely when you hear it read, but if you sit down and say, well, now exactly what's being said, then you feel page after page page after page after page trying to encompass all that's being said, and you're finally just overwhelmed by all that's there.

So what you need is someone to help you go through it, and I'm going to help you this morning. But I must confess that I'm helping you because John Stott helped me, and his commentary on this passage divides it up in such a way that, well, his sort of well-trained mind is able like a surgeon to cut all this apart and to show you all that's there.

[11 : 06] So I commend his commentary to you. It's sort of like going and having a holiday in a park and spending two weeks there before you go on the guided tour on one of the nature walks with one of the naturalists to show you all the things that you hadn't seen by yourself.

And he and the naturalist will show you the plants and the animals and the nests and the various ecological chains, and suddenly you're aware that a whole lot of things are going on that you weren't aware of.

So when John begins this passage by saying to you, Beloved, love one another, then he begins to say, Now this is what I mean by that.

The first thing that he means, and I want you to understand this, is what he means by love. And it's not that kind of soppy and sentimental thing that I was talking about when I told you that there's similarities between me and my dog.

It's something quite different. It's this, and this is the definition that's given. To love is to seek another's positive good at one's own expense.

[12:29] To seek another person's positive good at one's own expense. That doesn't mean that that person has to be lovable or has to be attractive or has to command or allure you.

It only means that you can seek their positive good at your own expense. And if you're prepared to love in those terms, you'll find there's lots of people in the world that need to be loved in that way. So that your responsibility is, in following this, beloved, love one another, is to seek one another's positive good at your own expense.

Now that seems a very costly thing to do. And so John gives three reasons why you should do it. And the first one is a statement which is repeated twice, and it says, God is love.

Look at chapter 4, verse 8. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

[13:52] Now the Bible says four things about what God is. It says here that God is love. On another occasion it says God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

On another occasion it says God is a consuming fire. And on another it says God is spirit. And so you have these four statements in the New Testament about the character of God.

But this is the final statement, that God is love. love. So that the reason you are to love one another is because God is love.

And you owe your being to him. The very source of your life is in God, and you are in some ways an expression of him.

And he is love. So that if you look again in chapter 4 and verse 16, this is what you read. So we know and believe the love God has for us.

[15:06] God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. Most people are not aware of the nature and character of God.

And so John begins his argument by saying the reason that you're to love one another is because God is love.

And you are most perfectly expressing who you are when you love one another. You are being God-like because God is love.

That's the first argument, and I think it's a difficult argument to come to terms with. If you've lost somebody through a sudden death, if you've been badly hurt in business, if you've been frustrated or terribly disappointed by some tragedy in your life, and somebody comes along and says to you, God is love, everything in you tightens into a knot of rebellion, and you say, no, that's not true to my experience.

You deny it. And you deny it in all your humanity because that's not who God is to you. But John begins his argument by saying the reason you're to love one another is because God is love.

[16:42] And he insists on that. But then he goes on to his second point. And the second point that he makes is that God has revealed this love in Christ.

Look at chapter 4, verse 9. And you have three statements in this section. Chapter 4, verse 9 reads, 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.

Okay, this is God revealing his love by acting in history. This God, about whose nature you may have some questions, said, If you want to know who I am, here is who I am.

God sent his love, sent his son into the world that we might live through him. God sent Jesus Christ into the world so that in history, the love of God is demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

This is the demonstration, the manifestation, as this verse says, of the love of God. So if you want to know what God's love is like, then you look at Jesus Christ.

[18:14] Chapter 4, verse 10. Read it carefully. In this is love, not that we loved God, that's not where it started or where it starts, but God, that he loved us and sent his son to be the expiation for our sins.

Again, you have that picture of God sending his son. This is how God expresses himself. You know how you would love to be able to take pen and paper and to write a book and pass on to generations still to come, all that you are and all that you've thought and all that you've understood and the magnificent view that you have of the world.

But you get through a few pages, tear them up and say, that doesn't say it, I can't, I can't put it into words. Or you might take a canvas and paint and say, I'm going to, like Michelangelo, express all

the beauty that I see in the world.

And then you make a mess on the canvas and tear it up and throw it away because you can't quite do it. Well, the nature of God perfectly expressed what he wanted to say in front of us all by sending his son to be the expiation of our sins, the one who takes our sins away so that they're no longer counted against us.

And God is able to perfectly express himself in Jesus Christ. So that again you read in chapter 4 and verse 14, the same thing.

[20 : 02] We have seen, John writes, and testify that the father hath sent his son as the savior of the world so that God has acted in history and the purpose of his action is to express his love to all the world that Jesus might be savior of all the world.

So those are the first two reasons that God gives us to love one another. Because God is love, because God has expressed that love in Jesus Christ so as to enable you to love.

Then he gives a third reason. And this is found in chapter 4, verse 12. No man hath seen God.

If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us. God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us.

So that the idea of love starts with the character of God, love, the expression of love is revealed in the death of Jesus Christ, and the perfection of his love is to be expressed by you.

[21 : 36] Beloved, let us love one another. Here you see the perfection of God's love at work in the world, at work in history.

it's a staggering statement that God, God's love is to come to its perfection as it is expressed through us.

Do you see what that means? It means that the person, that what you are primarily is to be a vehicle for the expression of the essential character of God as it is portrayed in Jesus Christ, that God's love is perfected in us.

And that's why this passage, which we have for our epistle, says, Beloved, let us love one another.

So that the great thing, I think, about the church, and about your calling as a Christian, is that God has chosen you and me in our relationship to be to one another, to give expression to the perfection of God's love.

Let me go back again to what love is. Do you remember? when it said, love is seeking another's positive good at one's own expense.

[23 : 24] The delight and fulfillment of your life and mine is to be, in our relationship to one another, the most perfect expression of the love of God.

God. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, by the love which you have one for another, because this is the love of God perfectly expressed.

You're not here primarily to be loved, but you're here primarily to give expression to the love of God.

And this body, with all its humiliation and all its weakness and all its sinfulness and all its failure, is nevertheless to be the instrument by which the love of God is defined expression.

expression. And this body of the church, of us, one in relationship to another, is the body which is going to take seriously the command, Beloved, let us love one another, to give expression to that love one to another.

That's our responsibility. That's our high calling. There are two statements in this passage which I want just to refer you to in conclusion.

[25 : 04] It's not that we love God, but that he loved us. That's the beginning. It's not you generating some love for God.

In fact, the love of God is primarily expressed in your relationship to one another. your love of God is something which is expressed through you to another person.

It's not that we loved him, but that he loved us. And the second statement, which comes also in this passage, and with which I conclude, is, it's not that he loved us first, that we loved him, but that he first loved us.

So that what happens when you are urged to love one another is that you are giving expression to that which God gave expression to in loving us and in demonstrating that love to us in Jesus Christ. Christ. And that's what it is, to be called to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, that men do not understand the love of God and will not understand the love of God until it reaches its perfection in you and I.

[26 : 37] and that's what we're called upon to do. And I don't know how you see your life, but I don't see any more important task for you and I in the conduct of our lives in these days than to take

very seriously the responsibility, beloved, to love one another.

Remember, that doesn't depend on our being lovable. That only depends on realizing that God first loved us.

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Hymn number 184.

Hymn number 184. health entra eigene■ you tree, and Missouri will 72, of temps the sea po■ in mantleatz increase Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[29 : 56] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.