

God's Amazing Love

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Date: 20 September 2020

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[0 : 00] All right, I know you've been there for the last three weeks, so you know exactly the book that I'm going to be preaching of or where to find it in your Bible. We are going to be in 1 John this morning. 1 John chapter 4 is going to be our key text. If you're late joining us, we are in the middle of a series on the attributes of God. My plan is to speak today and preach two more times.

And my hope and my prayer has been that you will come to a greater love through a greater knowledge of our great and glorious God. How great is our God to be able to sing that with the knowledge that we have this morning? I want to share with you about God's really amazing, incredible, awesome love.

So I'm just going to read today's text, 1 John 4, starting in chapter 4, verse 7. 1 John 5, verse 7. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. [2 : 27] Love. Love. Probably the most mysterious word in the English language, which is ironic since we use that word so many times. Let's be honest. We love love, don't we? We love, we love to, we sing about it.

We write poems about love. If you can't sing, you buy songs that sing about the love you feel. If you can't write, you buy cards that say the sentiments of love that you want to communicate to another. We chase love. We want love. Many argue that love completes us, that I could be in the roughest, worst situation. If I had love, I would be all right. One of my friends used to say, may the Lord give me a good wife to love and I'll live in the Arctic my whole life. But let's be honest. We don't really, truly understand love, do we?

I mean, really, there's a lot of books, there's movies, and in many times they're always trying to describe love. You know, what is it? What is it supposed to feel like? What are we supposed to do with love? What is it that it's supposed to help us overcome? Once in a while we'll come across a quote-unquote love expert, we'll listen to them, and then we'll think, yeah, I'm not too sure they really know what they're talking about. You know, even as Christians, we struggle with this idea of love and how to communicate it.

[4 : 38] One of the mistakes that we make as believers in Christ is we make love bigger than every other attribute of God. You've heard it said, God is love. We just read this in this verse 8. God is love.

So when we're trying to explain it to someone, we just simply say, God is love. When we try to explain it to people who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we just say, man, God is love. He's love.

When we try to explain it to our kids, God is love. We begin there. Why do we begin there? Because God really is about love. It is impossible to talk about Christianity, about Jesus Christ, and God the Father, and God the Spirit without talking about love.

See, when the Apostle John tells us here in 1 John that God is love, he is not giving us a definition of God, right? He's not singling out this attribute of love over all other attributes. What the Apostle John is telling us when God is love is a fact, not a definition.

It is a fact. God is love. Just as God is holy, God is just, God is good, God is faithful.

[6 : 34] All of those elements make up God, but there is this quality of God that is love, and we love it.

If we were to use God is love as a definition, the problem happens is that we start to worship love rather than the God who loves.

Today, I want to focus on this most amazing attribute of God's love. The problem is it is so hard to describe the immense attribute of love that God is.

It's almost too big of a word, too big of a concept, too big of an understanding for us to truly grasp. In fact, for some of us, we grasp it, we just don't accept it.

The reality is if you have been in a church community long enough, you've heard three words used from the Bible that describe God's love.

[7 : 56] There's three primary Greek words that are used to describe love. The first word is eros, which denotes physical attraction that a husband would have for his wife and his wife would have for her husband.

It's that physical intimate. We also have the understanding of phileo, which means a fondness, the love that we have for our friends, a brotherly love.

However, the word that is used more times at a, it's not a 10 to 1 ratio, it's more like a 50 to 1 ratio. It's actually probably more than that, is agapeo. And Scripture uses this in many of the commands. Love your neighbor as yourself.

The Greek word there is agapeo, and I'm going to describe what that word means in a second.

Ephesians 5, which we're going to get into probably next month as we return to meeting in church as a person.

[9 : 04] We're going to be returning to Ephesians 5. The command of husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Agape.

Why? This is understood as the highest form of love there is. This is a type of love that is not bound by feeling.

It is not bound by attraction. It is not bound by impulse or a passing fleeting thought. Agape love is a love rooted deep within the one who loves.

Agape love, the love that we're talking about God here, is a love rooted deep within the one who loves.

Agape love is a sacrificial love. It's a love that begins with, how can I love you? It does not ask what you, how you can love me.

[10 : 11] It is a love that seeks the other's good. There is no question or curiosity of what that person's love can benefit me.

It is a love that seeks the highest good in the person who is love. Lust is the opposite.

Lust is what can that person do for me? How can they gratify my needs, my desires?

How can they build me up? Love is how do I care for you? How do I lift you up?

What's interesting is that agape loves gives at great cost. Agape love is a sacrificial loves.

[11 : 13] In fact, one theologian simply states, it is the greatest of all loves because it loves the unlovely. It loves the unlovely.

The fact of the matter is, we want to be loved. We want to be loved. But what kind of bothers people about the agape kind of love is that they buff at the fact that there's nothing that they can do to earn more of that love.

You see, what's so amazing about the love of God is that God chooses to love the unlovely. Guess what? We are the unlovely. We were enemies of God, people who hated God, detested God.

But God still loves us. It was interesting. I was in a, I knew a former church and they had a ministry and they found out that the ministry, which was called a love ministry, was only actually ministering to their friends and family members.

And when they were challenged, they said that it's just so much easier to do it that way. And those are the people that they wanted to love. Till my pastor friend had to explain to them that was not love at all.

[12 : 52] Love was to love those people who aren't your friends. The people you do not know. The people you are frightened of. The people who sometimes make you feel unwelcome. That is the love that Jesus Christ is calling you to.

You see, what's so amazing about God's love is that God loved the outcast, the outsider. He loves us, the sinners, the disobedient, the rebels, the enemies.

And it's the same God who is holy. The same God who punishes sin. It's the same God who says, I will pour out my wrath on the ungodly.

Yet somehow, for some reason, God has made us as Christians the objects of His love.

So this morning, I want to do two things. One, I want to present you a model of perfect love. I want us to see what a model of perfect love is.

[14:08] And then, I want to pull out five qualities. These are five other attributes in many ways that help us explain the type of love that God has for you and me.

Just please pray with me as we get into this subject. Father, love. We think we know it. We think we've got it. We look for it. We want it. We search for it.

Father, I pray that you would give my voice clarity. May it be thunder on a sunny day. May it be clear.

May it resonate with us on such an important, great topic. Love. Father, give us ears to hear. Father, some of us have been hurt by the idea of love. hearts are wounded. Pride has been damaged.

[15:16] Attitudes have been misshapen. Today, as we sit here and we hear the truth of your words spoken today, I pray that you would bring assurance to souls.

I pray that you will bring clarity to minds. I pray that you'll bring healing to hurt hearts.

To abused minds. And to souls that have experienced and endured so much pain.

Father, my goal is at the end of this sermon, they may stand up and glorify you for this great love that you have for us.

In your name. Amen. The first, the most important thing to understand or how we see and understand love is in the Trinity.

[16:29] Dave actually spoke about this in the sermon series on the Trinity that he did in August. But the greatest model of love that we have is the understanding we see in the pages of Scripture of the love that God the Father has for God the Son.

The love that God the Son has for God the Father and God the Spirit. And how the God the Spirit has a great, deep, abiding love for God the Father and God the Son.

Even before time existed, this love existed. This relationship existed. This perfect love between the members of the Trinity existed.

It was a flawless love. An unblemished love. I will say it again. It is a perfect love. It has always been there since time began.

Could there be a greater example of love than we see in the pages of Scripture? From the very beginning when we read the Gospel of John, the Gospel of John is filled with so much teaching on how much love there exists between God the Father and God the Son.

[17:49] If only for a moment to go back to Matthew. Jesus is about to begin his earthly ministry. He is baptized. And at Matthew 3.17, God from heaven says, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.

The baptism was the sending out of his Son for his three-year ministry that will end at the cross with the greatest expression of love that you and I will ever experience.

But he sets out on this journey with these words from his Father, my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

John 1.18 says, No one has ever seen God, but only God who is at the Father's side. He has made known. When we read that from the ESV, which I'm reading, we read this word side.

If you have a New American Standard, it actually uses a different word. It uses the word bosom. Bosom. And the imagery that is created, it's talking about Jesus at the side of God.

[19:21] We see this as an intimate picture of a child at his father's breast. We know this today. It is a beautiful and incredible cherished picture when you see a parent holding their child on their knee as they lean in to the most trusted, comfortable, safe place in the whole wide world.

That is the image of the relationship that Jesus Christ has with God the Father. John 3.35 says, The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands.

What that means is that Jesus Christ has a role to do, let's just say a job to do, and God the Father is giving him everything that he needs to complete that task.

It's the same thing we as parents do for our children. What parent doesn't want to give his children the best, whether it be financial resources, a safe home, an education, or the tools in order for them to better themselves in this world?

On a side note, probably the best thing that a parent can give their child is the understanding of Jesus Christ and the wisdom that is preached in the Word of God.

[20 : 58] John 5.20 says, For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. John 10.17, For this reason, the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

John 14.31, But I do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father. And then we go back to the high priestly prayer.

This is the prayer that happens the night before Jesus is crucified. He is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. And we're going to look at several verses here this morning.

But the first one I want us to key in on is John 17.24. He simply says, Father, I desire that they also, speaking of us, whom you have given me.

And I want you to understand that. We're going to get into that later on in this service. That you have given me. We have been given by God the Father to the Son. And it says, may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you love me before the foundation of the world.

[22 : 21] This is the love of the Trinity. Now, why am I focusing on the model of Trinitarian love?

Because we know the understanding that we can't love like Jesus loves the Father. We can't love like God loves the Son. We can't love like God the Spirit loves the Son and the Spirit.

But I want you to understand something so clear right here, right now. as the Father loves the Son is the same love that He loves you and me with.

Do you get that? The same love God the Father has for His Son is the same love that He has for you and I.

John 17, 26. I made known to them your name and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

[23 : 39] That love, God, this is Jesus Christ praying before the Father. Father, that love that you and I have experienced, this is the same love. I want them to know this so that they will know that this same love will exist between us and them.

The creation, the created, the people of God. I am not naive to know that sometimes the idea of love escapes us.

I know that there are some of us when we speak of this love, we don't know it.

The reality is some of us have not been loved rightly by our parents. Our fathers and our mothers sought their own love rather than loving us as children.

children. Some of you stood before a pastor, before witnesses and testified that you would love this woman and a woman testified that she would love this man in marriage yet it never ever happened.

[25 : 02] I understand that some of you have experienced an abuse of love, a neglected love, a hurtful love.

love. But I want you to understand right here, right now that this love that God the Father expresses to us as children, as created beings is big, it's true, it's right, it's pure, and it's perfect.

perfect. There is no height to describe this love. There is no wit to describe this love. There is no depth to describe it.

But I can tell you right here, right now, that the love that God loves the Son with is the same love that He offers to you and me.

It is the exact same love. What does that love look like?

[26 : 24] I want to give you five words that are going to help us understand what this love is. The first word is infinite.

The love that God loved His Son with is an infinite love, and the love that He loves us with is an infinite love. Looking back at the high priestly prayer, John 17, I want to read in verse 23.

I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Jesus Christ, again, talking about that relationship with God, the Father, the reason I am loving these people is so that love might be manifested so that they may know the love that you have for them.

Father, this is Jesus Christ, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

[27 : 36] If you want to know how far back the love of God goes for you, it goes back to the foundation of the world before time began.

If you missed my sermon on grace, I explored this idea a little bit more, I would encourage you to go back to that one. It was just four weeks ago. You see, why is this so important that we were loved before the foundation of the world?

Scripture teaches that God knew us. And what's interesting is that God chose to love us before there was even anything lovable about us.

That God in his heart chose to love on us before whether we responded or there was something good, handsome, beautiful, kind, loving in us.

Anything worth loving didn't happen yet. And the idea of God's infinite love that he chose to love us before we do anything is actually destroys this idea of having low self-esteem.

[28 : 50] It destroys the idea of not feeling like we're worthy of God's love. love. Why?

Because the worthiness is based on God, not us. You see, God the Father, before you were even lovable, chose to love you as much as he loves his own son.

And let me tell you, God really loves his son. how much does he love us?

We know John 3, 16, right? For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

You see, this verse both humbles us and lifts us up at the same time. we understand that there's nothing lovable about us but he dies for us so we understand that we are children of God.

[30 : 09] John 17, 26 says, I have made known to them your name and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

So when do we start to understand this love? If we were chosen before the foundation of the world at that moment where we receive salvation in this life is when that love becomes real and what I mean by real is it becomes experiential.

the moment we put our faith in Jesus Christ we understand what it is to be loved. You see Jesus Christ takes a resident in our hearts and as he does that he brings the love of the Father with him. this is an intimate love a limitless love and it is an infinite love. It is the working out of a plan that began before eternity and it goes beyond today.

It is a love that we will always have. It is a love that is incalculable that the love that God loves the Son so he loves you and me with.

[31 : 48] That is the first word to describe God's love for us is it is an infinite love. The second word that we can use to describe God's love is it is a sacrificial love.

It is a sacrificial love. Fact is true love gives. It does not seek its own. It does not enter into a relationship to see how much it can gain.

It enters into a relationship to see how much it gives. The fact of the matter is true love costs.

It is interesting in the verse of Colossians and we mess this up so often when we think about love. Colossians 3.12 you have heard me refer to it many times.

It says Paul calls us to put on compassionate hearts. What Paul is communicating to us is we are not supposed to feel bad for people who don't have perhaps there is a brother struggling financially does not have a roof over their head or needs a friend for a period of time.

[33 : 10] The compassionate heart that Paul is calling us to is to feed the person who does not have food. To put a roof over the head over the one who does not have a dwelling place to rest.

He's calling us to action. So the love that is sacrificial is an action. It is a love that gives.

It's not a love and Paul or Jesus Christ mocks it. Don't say you're going to pray for that person. If you have the means to love that person with their needs, love them.

Give. Let's go back to John 3 16. How much does God give? We know, right?

For God so loved the world, he gave his what? His only son. He didn't give his one of twelve sons, his one of three sons, or even one of two sons.

[34 : 15] God gave his only one son. God gave us everything. God does not hold anything back.

The gift of Jesus Christ was the greatest gift that God could give us. It was the greatest of sacrifices. It was his only son.

God the father gave us the greatest gift, which is the love that comes from the greatest sacrifice.

Paul attests to this in Romans 5.8.

God shows us love for us in that we were still sinners. Christ died for us. John 15.13, greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life.

love. Now think about God's love for us. God knew where that love would end.

[35 : 29] It would end at the cruel cross of Calvary. God love God that he would allow us stupid human beings to insult his son, mock his son, torture his son, falsely accuse his son.

But yet, as Ephesians 5 testifies to us, Christ loved the church so much that he died for her. John 10 11, Jesus Christ simply says, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

You see, God's love is true love. God's love is a costly love. love. God's love is a sacrificial love. So we understand that God's love is an infinite love. We understand that God's love is a sacrificial love. And the third quality I want us to understand about God's love, God's love is freely given to us. [36 : 50] What I mean by that, it is volitional. There's no strings attached. He did not have to do it. He freely volunteers his love. That God freely chose to pour out his love on us.

You see, the reason God chose to love us is found in him, not found in me, not found in you. It is a love that originated with God. God didn't start loving us because we responded to something, or in response to, we started loving him.

love him. No, we love him because he loved us first. It was not a reciprocal type of love. There is nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing that you and I can do in the world that makes us attractive to God.

Why? He is a holy God, we are not. We are a filthy, perverse people. We are full of hatred, malice, anger.

God is love. He is holy. How does that exist together? Well, that workings begins with this thing called love.

[38 : 09] Why? Because he chose to love us. Take a look in Deuteronomy 7, 7, and 8. I'll read this passage. But it's God speaking to Israel. He says, it was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you.

Get this, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers.

That the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. If God were looking for something mightier or better to love, a people that had more ingenuity, creativity, could have been Egypt, it could have been Assyria, it could have been Babylon.

But it wasn't. Why did God choose Israel to love? Because God chose Israel to love.

Martin Luther said, God doesn't love us because we are more valuable. We are more valuable because God loves us.

[39 : 29] And God loves us with an infinite love and a sacrificial love. Notice in the verse we read this morning in 1 John 4.10, in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loves us and sent his son to be the propitiation, the redemption for our sins.

You see, God is the initiator. God is the great initiator. God is the great pursuer. God is the one who set his heart upon you.

In fact, God doesn't even take no for an answer. God chases you. He pursues you. He persists in pouring out his love on you.

Fact of the matter is, God doesn't stop until he finds us. God doesn't stop until he overcomes us. God doesn't stop until he turns us around, smacks us about, so we see the love that he has for us. God's arms and hearts are open to the people he chooses to love. And he does so willingly and completely of his own accord.

[40 : 58] So we see God as both infinite, we see God as being sacrificial, we see him being volitional. eternal, and the fourth characteristic of God's love is that God loves us with an eternal love.

It is eternal love. It is not a love for a moment. It is not a love for a season. It's not even that summer kind of love.

And anybody who's ever been to camp usually knows what I'm talking about a summertime of love, right? You're at camp, you meet a girl, you meet a guy, you think they're the greatest thing, September rolls around, yeah, I kind of don't like you as much, right?

It doesn't work that way with God. See, the love that God has for us, as I said, began in eternity past, and it will continue to the end of time. You see, God planned out his love that he chose us, he chose to love us, as Jeremiah 31, 3 says, I have loved you with an everlasting love.

It's a love that's always been, and like I'm saying, just even the moment we experience it, that love has always been there. Ephesians 1, 4, and 6, we've covered this, but it's talking about even as he chose us in him before foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him, in love he predestined us.

[42 : 35] That word predestined throws people off, but what it means is, before he went out on the journey, the destination was already chosen.

We were chosen long before you and I experienced that love. You see, the idea of predestination expresses the greatest love that there has ever been.

That the destination, the love, our salvation was determined before the journey began. God loves us.

God gives us to the Son to be redeemed and God the Son gives us back to the Father to be glorified. It's almost before time began.

You had the Spirit, the Father and Son, and the Father has us and he's giving his most precious gift to the Son. Glorify them and he takes them in.

[43 : 42] And through the power of the Spirit, we are saved and then he gives us back to the Father as a more precious gift and it's all meant to glorify God.

You see, we are predestined to be loved. We are predestined to be glorified. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son which is to be made holy.

God predestined to pursue us. God predestined to answer our questions. God predestined to rescue us from our brokenness, from our sin and shame, the jails that we created for us.

God predestined to save us. And what keeps us is his attribute of sovereignty.

There is no one greater, stronger, bigger than God. So for those people who think they can fall away. Once God has you and you're his, you may be stupid, you may sin, you may pursue your own stupidity for a while and God will let you.

[45 : 07] He'll let you run your course so you can come back to him and understand who you are in Christ. But you cannot break yourself from the love of God because you're not stronger than God.

God's will cannot be thwarted. And the final quality, the fifth quality of God's love that I want to share with you today is that God's love for you is a passionate love.

It is a passionate love. And why do I insist on you knowing this? Because often when people think of this predestination, they think of this idea like there's this conveyor belt going by and God picks some for heaven and others just go to hell.

That's not how it works at all. That is a completely wrong, unbiblical imagery used to express God's love for us. He does not coldly say, him I choose, him I do not.

God. The Bible never expresses God's love as being cold or stoic. The love that the Bible expresses for us is a love that is full of affection for us.

[46 : 32] Deuteronomy 39 says, for the Lord will again take delight in prospering you as he took delight in your fathers when you obey the voice of the Lord your God.

Jeremiah 32 41, I will rejoice in doing them good. Zephaniah 3 17 says, the Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save you.

He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you by his love. He will exalt over you with loud singing. Why?

Because the glory of our salvation is found in God. When we are saved and we accept that love, we're not glorified, but God and Jesus Christ are glorified, but Jesus Christ is taking us and as a gift of love, given us back to the Father.

And the Father has more glory. God, God, Jesus Christ doesn't do that with a cold heart. He does that with a deeply affectionate heart, a loving heart, a caring heart, a rejoicing heart.

[47 : 47] The greatest story that's ever been told that people say is found in Luke 15, the story of the prodigal son. We see the beautiful picture of a father who runs and kisses his son who returns to him.

This is the love of God. And God takes great pleasure and joy in choosing us.

It's not a cold, calculated decision, but it is a heart warming passionate, delighting love.

Perhaps you're saying to yourself, hey, maybe at one time I knew that love. I want to have that love.

Well, maybe today's the day you make that choice to run back to your father.

Maybe you're that lost coin. Maybe you're going to force yourself onto the open floor so God can find you. Maybe you're that lost sheep.

[49 : 01] Maybe you just need to cry louder so God can hear you. But today is the day that you can make the decision to accept God's love for you.

for God so loved the world that he gave his only, his one and only son for you.

Would you accept that truth this morning? Would you accept Jesus Christ into your heart? And what I mean by that, are you willing to declare him Lord and say Father, I am yours and yours alone and I want to be cherished, molded, and to be made holy into the likeness of you and I can only do that through your love, oh Father.

Today is that day. If you've never wanted anything to do with Jesus and now you want something to do with Jesus, now is the time. If you do, pray with me right here, right now as we come before him. Let's bow our heads and go before the King of Kings. Dear Lord Heavenly Father, Father, forgive us for ignoring your love. Forgive us for forgetting your love.

[50 : 20] Forgive us for thwarting your love. Forgive us for doubting your love. Forgive us for not understanding your love. Father, we stand here now before the testimony of your word that your love began before I was even born.

And that in your love you chose me to love you. And you love me because of your great love.

Father, I need to stand here and I accept that love and I need to call out for that love. And Father, for many of us, forgive us for pursuing earthly love as opposed to heavenly loves.

Father, we've loved our activities. Some of us even love our children and our spouse more than we love you. Then we find we come to you we're dry, passionless.

We don't want to spend time with you. We don't have the energy, the time. Not understanding that you desire for us to love our wives and our children in such a way that is modeled on the love that you have for us.

[51 : 36] but Lord, we need you. Father, may this be the day of all humbling. May this be the day where I finally get on my knees and accept your love.

The love that makes me your child. That carries with it the promise grace. That the same love, this great love you had for your son is the same love that will be visited on me today.

And Father, forgive us for ever doubting, for ever crying about it because we don't love him. Father, let us look forward to our relationship and our growth with you.

Trusting that this life, this circumstance, this COVID era is totally will, your will, it is your sovereignty that allows these things to happen.

But let it not diminish my love, my zeal, and my passion for you, O Lord, Father, Jesus Christ. So God, as we come before you this morning, may this be the morning of mornings, the day of all days, where I finally get to experience and know the personal love that you have for me, that you had for your son.

[53 : 11] And Father, forgive us for not loving the same way that you loved us. we ask you these things in your most gracious, glorious, all powerful, all loving name.

Amen. May God's grace be upon you. May you experience an infinite, sacrificial love that he has for you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.