

# Loved of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] On a communion weekend, is it something very different?

Very, very different. In many respects, most respects, I venture that communion should be the same as, let's call it, the normal Christian life.

Communion is given to us to reinvigorate our faith. But so is God's word, the Bible, week after week, at the table at home.

Communion is given to us to demonstrate our faith, to proclaim the Lord's death till he comes, as our hope. But so too is our calling to obedience by the Bible, as the Bible calls us.

We seem to often come to a communion time, and perhaps more so in our own way of doing things, where it seems to be regarded as a time to expect or to search for perhaps some extra kind of experience.

[ 1 : 33 ] You might say, well, yes, that's right. Well, what kind of experience? What experience? How is it to be evaluated?

But what about until the next time? What might you be thinking to live by until the next time? In the meantime, between this communion weekend and the next, will you be then falling back or looking inside to see what you have?

What's the state of my faith? What's the state of my hope? Of my love? A couple of days ago, I spoke about love for the brothers.

And I drew to your attention that the Bible says, love one another, and that will tell you that you have passed from death to life.

But it is not the source of life. I want to turn your attention to that this evening. For you, the believer.

[ 2 : 47 ] Or for you who might be asking, what is faith? I want to turn you to where it must rest. I'm sure you know well, especially if you've been regular here in the past weeks, I'm sure you know well that one day, Lord Jesus asked Peter, do you love me?

Three times, wasn't it? And Peter answered, you know I love you. But surely, the big question for every one of us is not so much, do I love him?

But that you ask the Lord, do you love me? Paul wrote to Romans, and he spoke to the people in the church there, and he gave them two titles.

He called them saints, but he has a wonderful name for them. Those loved by God. To all who are loved by God.

To those in Rome, but surely in the generations since, also to everyone across the church, this is the best of names. And we come across it again later in Romans, in different words, but we read in chapter 8, verses 38 and 39.

[ 4 : 16 ] And before that as well, those who receive the love of Christ, what can separate us? And he is convinced in those last verses of chapter 8 that nothing can separate us.

He's given a great catalog that is supposed to embrace everything possible, and none can separate us from, not my love for him, but his for me.

The love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Yes, it is good that we call him our beloved, beloved, but the great wonder is that he calls us loved, beloved.

And as I seem to have done each time I've been here this weekend, I only make two brief points this evening. First to dwell for a moment on the name we have.

The name is given to his people. And the second is to look at the love that holds us. First then, the name we have, or the name we've been given, you might say.

[ 5 : 29 ] This name, loved of God. I took a look, and this doesn't come up very often.

Quite often, you come to the name beloved, but it is a use given by the apostles as they wrote to the various churches. They were writing from themselves to their fellow believers in the churches,

and they called them, they addressed them as beloved.

And that's a wonderful expression in itself. You might be inclined, as you hear that, from one believer to another believer, you might go back to that love for the Lord that Peter spoke about. You know that I love you. And I take nothing away from that. Please understand me. Do I love the Lord?

And we have much reason, so much reason to love him when we remember what the communion speaks to us of, the gift of our Lord to us.

[ 6 : 42 ] But isn't it true that even when we ask ourselves the question, do I love the Lord, it's a signal to us that our own perception of what our love is can be very weak.

It can be volatile. Our love itself can be volatile, or what we call our love. Perhaps it's better in today's age to speak of our devotion to him, but even that can be erratic.

In our day, love has become terribly weakened as a term. It's quite emotive. That's not the kind of love that the New Testament speaks about.

It's not the kind of love that the apostles were expressing as they wrote to the believers and the churches, writing to the beloved.

It was a firmer base. It was a true commitment from their hearts to one another. But that can come from a very different place.

[ 7 : 48 ] How often our love for our brother, who we can see, depends on what we see. How often what we think of as our love for them, for one another.

The apostles, on the other hand, they expressed their love on account of the believer being one who is loved of God. It was a given for them.

These are believers in the Lord. They know that they are beloved of God. And so that is how they will write to them and express them. It's not about their personal whim or inclination.

And that's getting us closer to what really matters. What is it that matters for the view that we have of one another? Is it my likes or dislikes?

Is it the sentiment that I have towards you? Or is it, I believe the apostles had this in mind rather, who does the Lord love? They become my beloved.

[ 8 : 54 ] I think John puts it very simply in 1 John 4, 19. You know this. We love. Yes, we love. Because he first loved us.

And it's that name that Paul uses. The one who has come under the love of God. And so I ask you this evening, will you take this away with you?

And if you're looking to say, well, what is my love like? How strong is my love for the Lord even?

What does my love compare? Even my love for him, how does it compare with his for me?

What is his love for me? It's the very love he has for his son. God is love. One love to all he loves. And we learn of his love, we discover his love, we receive his love through his son. It's the love of God in Christ Jesus. And it's that name that he then gives to his people.

[ 10 : 07 ] The love that the church has for the Savior is a new thing. It is a wonderful thing. man. But that would never be if it were not for his love, the love of Christ, the love of God towards his church, towards you, towards me.

It's that that gives us hope leading to endurance. peace. And it's that that Paul then goes on to speak about in that second reading in chapter 8.

And I'm calling this the love that holds us. You see, I'm interested in my own little way for every one of you as you go out of this place, as you go through the various things that are given to you to live and to do, at least until the next time you're given the Lord's Supper here.

What do you have to take with you? What will you have tomorrow? What does the Lord's Supper say to you and to me?

What is it encouraging you to take with you? It's this love that will hold you. And these words are not strange to many of you.

[ 11 : 36 ] You'll quote them quite easily, I think. I'm sure that neither death, well maybe not in this version, but these words exactly, but I'm sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation.

I'm sure that none of these things will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He's not talking about our love of God or our love towards God. Here it can only be God's love to us. You know these words but let's just pause a little longer this evening.

And when you look at these things, well even before that, who shall separate as verse 35 from the love of Christ, tribulation, distress, you know these things too and by experience.

Many know persecution, famine, nakedness or homelessness if you like, danger, sword. Take all of those things and then this bracketing that Paul does where he puts death and life and height and depth and gathering everything possible in all creation and he says they cannot separate you if God has given his love to you.

[13:02] Death or life. Angels even. Can life separate someone from the love of God? Well, the way we use it often does seem to.

Angels, if we get preoccupied with them, might be inclined to separate us. Present or future, the troubles or successes both now and to come or whatever powers or the full extent of creation when they come and attack you or even just niggle away at you.

I can't know what's ahead of you, whether you're going to suffer or you're going to be diverted by the good things of this life.

when I ask you, when you meet the circumstances of life, you respond to anything and everything. When you respond, will you be separated from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord? If it's only my love for him, very likely I'll be separated.

[14:17] but will you be separated from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus? If there is separation from God, it will be because I'm relying on my love for him, my trust in him, even my faith in him, my anything towards him if I'm separated from him.

but this will hold you. His love will hold you. The love of God that is towards us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And as you and I go out of here, do we wish to be kept walking faithfully with our God? And after the many blessings we receive, do we want to be sure that we will not fall away or stumble?

And if those are the desires of our hearts right now, what do we need to take hold of? What do we need to think of that we will be sure and steadfast in the way ahead of us?

What do we need to be especially aware of? Remember what he calls you, you who believe, loved of God, beloved, in him, through him who loved us, gathered into the arms of Christ, of whom the father said, this is my son, whom I love.

[15:50] As he looks on his son, he finds you there, the love of God in Christ Jesus. You, the believer who took the Lord's supper today, there are many things perhaps I could say to you, but one thing that I can think of to say to you is remember his name for you, that God says, my love, I love you.

Some of you here, perhaps many of you, you're not yet sure, or you're curious about these things, maybe you're defiant about these things.

You live your life wondering how many ways you can keep a distance between you and God. You have friends here, and they claim to be Christians.

What I'm talking about this evening is to remind every one of us, you too, that the hope of the believer, the Christian, is not because they love God so well, but because he loves them at all.

The hope that they have can be your hope, if you put yourself in his hands. Their hope is the only hope. Put yourself in his hands.

[17:30] Their hope, let it be your hope, your confidence, only in God. make this your longing, to know his love for you.

And I tell you, he has loved you. I hope you sang the song that says that he has made his righteousness known to all the nations.

nations. He has loved you so much that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him, whoever, that's you too, shall not perish, but have eternal life that you come into his love, you receive his love.

if you believe in the Lord Jesus, the name belongs to you too, loved of God. It's his love for you. And then you become inseparable from God himself, our maker, our keeper. He loved you.

[18:52] receive that love. Doesn't matter about your love, at least not to begin with, you can only love because he loves you.

I was inclined, the word that came to mind as I was anticipating this evening's service, was a one word title, beloved. And if you had seen that, I wonder what your thought might have been.

Perhaps you might have thought of the beloved, each of God's people towards each other. Or you might have thought of Jesus as your beloved. They're all wonderful things.

But if I were to use that word, it would be in place of simply this, loved of God. God, I urge you, I press on you. I can't go in any other way.

But your hope going on from here today is to remember that in Christ, I'm loved of God.

[ 20 : 11 ] And if it wasn't for due decorum in a place like this, I would say, wow, what more can be imagined that God loves me.

I don't need anything else. That's the fullness of life. Don't put up with anything else. love of God. But be sure to be found in the love of God in Christ Jesus. And that's not just for a moment. It's not just for a communion Sunday or the experience of a communion, a Lord's Supper.

Wonderful though they may be. It's not just for a moment either now or sometime in the future. the love of God towards each of his people to call you loved of God is eternal.

It's established before the foundation of the world and it's as unchanging as he is unchanging. And friends, I see no point in offering you anything else when I can offer you this, when I can bring this before you.

[ 21 : 32 ] And then you might say, well, what about you? Do I know this? I think so. It brings a soul at rest in him.

But whether or not I feel it or can tell that it's here, if it's not being presumptuous, I stand with Paul today to say I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, you name it, none of these things will be able to separate us because it's the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I say farewell and thank you for this visit. May you all be those loved of God and to grow therefore in your love for him.

May this be his word. May he bless it. Let us pray together. Amen. We know nothing like it, O Lord, and it's hard to grasp because you are so so much greater than we are, full of glory.

As we speak of your love, we can only understand that it too is full of glory beyond every imagination of our hearts.

[ 23 : 18 ] us. Yet we learn that you have so loved us as to give your one and only your begotten, your beloved son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, will not perish, but have everlasting life.

Lord, more and more cause us to dwell on not just a truth that is words, but to dwell on you, that life itself will rest upon you, that we will seek one thing from the Lord, to behold you, to admire you, and to know ourselves, to be under your love.

Draw near to every one of us here tonight, we pray, and for every one of us, that would be an impossibility, but for you, your love in all its fullness, your giving of yourself to us, be near, we pray, prevail upon us, that we cannot resist, that we will be open to the outpouring of your love into our hearts, and be kept faithful, true to you, and every day before us, that we will therefore find that you are also our help in every time of need, not a gift from your hand alone, but your hand in our hand, keeping us, upholding us, and for your own name's sake.

In our worship this evening, we ask, Lord God, that you will pardon us for every failing, every sin, every thought of our hearts that is inappropriate for your presence.

We ask too that you would preserve us by your near presence and your spirit in the days ahead.

We pray these things in your wonderful name, our Lord, and in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 26 : 00 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our closing praise this evening is in Psalm 27.

It's the Sing Psalms version, page 32, because we'll be singing from verse 4. Psalm 27, page 32, verses 4 to 6, verse 4 to 6.

Let's stand to sing together. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. One thing I'll leave before the Lord and this and seek all faith and but I may come within God's hand and dwell there all my days.

But on the beauty of the Lord I constantly I constantly make days and in his heart may seek to know direction in his ways.

For in his dwelling he will keep me safe in troubled days.

[ 28 : 25 ] Within his dead he'll shelter me and all the wrong be raised.

My head will let me lifted high above my enemies and in his dead have sacrificed with sounds of joy and grace.

I've been asked to mention that I will be going to the front door of the church and it would be good to greet you after the service. And now let us acknowledge our God and express his praise and then receive the blessing of the Lord.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory majesty dominion and authority before all time and now and forever.

And so may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

[ 30 : 06 ] Amen.