

1The Love of Christ is What the World Really Needs - 1 John 4:7-11

Our text for meditation for this morning is from the second reading of today: 1 John 4:7-11. Let us hear again these verses: **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”** Here ends the text of meditation.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed;

I think everybody here have heard the song of the Beatles “All you need is love.” I think we all agree with these words. But when we see the images of people dying in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Africa and other parts of the world due to wars we say: There is too much hate in the world, love is impossible to achieve.

We see how desperately the world needs love. Daily reports tell us that people not only are suffering because of wars but also the homeless, the hungry, and the poor are struggling to survive in their own communities. We see how greed and selfishness, not love, affects the lives of so many. We see how desperately the world needs love when we understand the apathy, the indifference, the disregard for another life, and for the needs or the feelings of others. Ours is still very much a “me first” world, where the only type of love that seems to matter is self-love.

What the world needs now is love, sweet love. Truer words may never have been spoken. But do people even know what love really is anymore? Throughout the 60's, there was an emphasis on something called free love, which equated love with nothing more than a bodily function. What we would refer to as sex and lust is still what many people think of as love. Relationships today are based less on commitment and caring than they are on satisfying one's own physical needs. Today love is something you can get by calling a toll free number. Love can be seen through a computer, cellular phone, or bought from another person on the street.

If you were to ask 100 different people for their definition of love, you would likely get about 100 different answers - and most of them would fall far short of the kind of love that John

speaks about in our text today. In the five short chapters in this epistle, John uses the word love in its various forms 43 times. And in our text today John teaches us about the love that the world really needs. It is the love that God has given to us, that totally accepting, committed, self-sacrificing and forgiving love which is so great that Christ comes and gives Himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world so that we might live through Him.

This is not the sugary love of romantic songs or the selfish love so common in our world. It is the true love of compassion, faithfulness, nurture and caring. It is the only love that can make a difference in our world. But John also says that God's love is something that is to be alive and active in us. He tells us: **Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

Yes friends, the world does need love - and the love it needs is God's love. What God teaches us today in His word is that His love will show itself in the world as we love one another as He has loved us. It is not hard for us to understand how a sinful world needs to experience and practice true God-like love. Can you imagine what our world would be like if all people were to love one another as Christ loved us? If that were true, we would not have to worry about locking our doors at night, because there would be no fear of violence and crime, because that God-like love would bring with it respect for the life and property of others.

There would be no drug problems in our society, because loving people could not sell drugs to people they love, or allow them to use something so hurtful to them. There would be no hunger or poverty because love would prompt people to respond fully and completely to whatever the needs of others might be. Selfishness and greed would give way to equality and concern for others. There would be no war, because loving people would look for better ways to solve their disagreements. Marriages, family relationships and friendships would be better and stronger than ever before. Apathy would be a thing of the past.

Yes, if the world were filled with God-like love, what the Bible and our text refer to as "agape", what a wonderful world it would be. Of course, reality is quite different, but we really do not expect this world to be a paradise, because an unbelieving world could care less about loving as God has loved us.

But what about us, God's people in the church? Are we the loving people we should be? Do our relationships with one another, our concern for one another, and our attitude towards one another reflect God's love at work in us? It has rightly been said that love is the mark of a

Christian. Jesus said: **By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**

One of the first things of the early Christian Church was the love that showed to one another - a love that was real and active in the care and concern shared among them. People were impressed that the Christians cared about the widows, the orphans, the poor and needy.

People were impressed by the fact that Christians could forgive one another and that they would forgive their enemies, rather than try to get even or bear a grudge. They were impressed that Christians shared with one another. But at times, even in John's day, that God-like love does not seem to show itself in the church. And we need to ask ourselves: do we truly love one another with the love that comes from God? Or do we just talk about love as a church?

God's word reminds us that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. No matter whom we are, what our background might be, or what we have done in the past, we are brought together as members of God's family - a family whose very existence is pure love. And we are reminded that as a loving family we are to care about one another, be concerned about one another; we are to help and encourage one another; we are to pray for one another.

But these things must be more than just words. In fact, in this epistle in 3:18 John said: **let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.** We can talk about love, but it does not mean anything unless we practice it. And the love we share is not the selfish love or self-seeking love of the world. It is the love we have in us because of God's love for us.

And it is wonderful to see that love in action. It fills me with great joy to visit someone who is sick at home or in the hospital and hear how glad they were to have someone from the church call them or visit them. It is encouraging to see our "Food bank at Faith with food for the needs of others." It is encouraging to see the support that our members have given to a boy who is suffering due to a brain tumor.

All these things are signs of God's love at work in us as we seek to love one another. But these things are only the tip of the iceberg. There are countless ways of showing God's love to others, just as there are countless needs for that love. We may phone or send a card to members who have not had the opportunity or blessing of regular contact with our church family, or with God through the worship we share.

You can wait for me to try to visit them all - or you can share a bit of God's love by paying a visit on a nearby member who has been absent. Remind them that we have missed them. Let them know you care about them. Find out if there is anything you can do for them. Your loving action will encourage them. Or look at the person sitting next to you today. That person needs

your loving prayers. Maybe you know of some of the worries and pains in their life - pray for them. Ask God to bless them.

Maybe you know someone who just needs to talk, someone who needs a friend. Will you show them God's love in sharing yourself with them? Maybe there is someone who needs your forgiveness - and in love, we seek to forgive others, just as Christ has forgiven us.

And God really does love us. Even though we often show a lack of love for God in all the sinful things we do, even though we show a willful disregard for His will in the way we live, still He loves us. He loves us enough to take all the sin and guilt of our lives which affects our relationship with Him and let His own Son suffer the punishment due to us because of our sin.

That is real love, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to take away our sin through His sacrificial death on the cross. And so great is His love that even death could not hold Him, for He rose again from the dead, to shower His love upon His people. Through Christ, God forgives sin - all sin. He accepts us for what we are, but more importantly, He redeems us and brings us into His family as beloved children. His love, that great, giving, caring, forgiving love changes the lives in all of His faithful. Amen

Now the peace of God which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.