

Theme: “God is Love”

Text: 1 John 4:7-11 (EHV)

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love has not known God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God’s love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another.

Life, with all of its complexities and mysteries, can really be boiled down to the basics. Think of how true this is in so many aspects of life. The ability to read and write and communicate with words boils down to simple letters and the alphabet. Complex math equations and calculations do not exist without basic numbers. Your dream car, with all the sophisticated, technological advances in the world isn’t getting out of your driveway without gasoline and oil (or if it’s electric, a charged battery). In sports, even on a professional level, you’ll often hear coaches harping on “Getting back to basics” and reminding their players about how important the fundamentals of the game are. If we’re really going to get down to basics, think about our basic needs: As human beings, if we don’t have our basic needs met—food, clothing, and shelter—does it really matter what else we have in life?

Well, we can add to that list of “basics” one more need that is the most “basic of all basics.” It is the subject of our sermon text for today: **Love**. **Love** is the most basic of our human needs and is essential when it comes to our spiritual life and faith as well. Even the secular world recognizes the essential nature and need human beings have for **love**. The 19th century French novelist, George Sand, once wrote, “There is only one happiness in this life, to love and be loved.” Or, as the Beatles famously sang, “All you need is love.”

However, without knowing the true source and true definition of **love**, we will never fully or truly know, or understand, or experience this most basic of all human needs. Knowing that **“God is love” (v. 8)**, as our text says, and knowing and believing how much He actually does love us—how incredible and unconditional His **love** for us is—is absolutely ESSENTIAL! It really is!

It’s essential because, first of all, it is an essential part of God’s very being: **“God is love” (v. 8)**. And if we don’t realize or understand God’s love, or the fact that God truly does love us we will never truly trust Him.

Think about that: If you don’t believe what our text tells us, that **“God is love” (v. 8)** you are not going to trust that the way He runs this world is truly “good.” If you don’t believe and know that this God who is **love** actually does also love YOU, you are not going to trust that the way He’s running your life, or that is truly “good,” or that He has your best interests in mind with whatever He allows to take place in your life. Can you see how important knowing and understanding that God does, in fact, love you is as you go through life especially in the difficult times?

When you were a child you perhaps didn’t always understand or realize, and definitely didn’t always agree with the way your parents did things (the way they raised you and your siblings, the way they disciplined you, clothed you, fed you, etc.), but if you knew and fully understood that your parents loved you and had your best interests in mind more often than not you would accept what they did for you and did to you because you knew, without question, that they loved you!

How much more does God deserve our full and complete trust in His goodness and **love** for us? Our text reminds us that not only is God Himself the actual embodiment and definition of **love**—**“God is love” (v. 8)**—He has shown us the ultimate expression of His love so that we might fully place our trust in Him and

never, EVER doubt His love for us—no matter what! John writes, **“This is how God’s love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (v. 9-10).** That is true love! We will never see or experience a greater expression of **love** than the love God shows to us in His Son Jesus.

You might know this already, but there are several words for “love” in the Greek language. The Greek word for “love” that is used here throughout our text is a word that describes the deepest, fullest, and most meaningful type of love: “*Agape*” (Greek: ἀγάπη pronounced “ah-GAH-pay”). *Agape* love is a love of the will.

- ✠ It is not a love based on the fleeting nature of emotions or circumstances.
- ✠ It is a love that loves just *because*; not a love “if.”
- ✠ It is a love of sacrifice and selflessness.
- ✠ It is a love that is concerned more with the one who is loved, rather than the lover.
- ✠ It is a love that brought down God’s Son from the comfort and splendor of heaven to our fallen earth, to live with us, to be one of us.
- ✠ It is a love that reaches out to heal and forgive.
- ✠ It is a love that loves the unlovable, the outcasts, and the outsiders.
- ✠ It is a love that takes time to bless the littlest and least among us.
- ✠ It is a love that willingly went to the cross; that went through death and hell itself, in order to give us life.

We will never come to fully appreciate or understand God’s *agape* love until we come to fully realize, understand, and appreciate our desperate need for His *agape* **love**. We are truly hopeless and lost without God’s love.

Without God’s *agape* love in Christ, we are hopeless—dead in our sins and headed for eternal death in the end. But with God’s undeserved *agape* love in Christ we are transformed by Him into His very children and heirs of His heavenly kingdom! In our sermon from a few weeks ago we were reminded of John’s words from the chapter before our sermon text, **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1 NIV).**

I’m sure you’ve heard this “Good News” before. It really is “basic.” But think of how *essential* and how good this news really is: You have been given this **love**; the true love of God Himself! You have received the gift of “God with us,” *Immanuel*; Jesus, the Savior.

Now what?

Well, John encourages us in the last verse of our text, **“Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another.” (v. 11).** John reminds us that the unconditional, saving *agape* love of God in Christ fills our hearts and moves us and inspires us to share and show that love with others. But you notice that John’s words are a bit surprising in that last verse, aren’t they? You would expect him to say, **“Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also ought to love Him,”** instead he tells us **“we also ought to love one another” (v. 11)!**

What this passage shows is that the best way to express our love for God—and the way He most wants us to express our love for Him—is to show love for our fellow human beings, especially, our fellow believers! That’s one of the reasons He has given us the blessing of other people in this world: To show our love for God through loving and serving them! Jesus Himself taught us this when He spoke of the acts of kindness and love that believers do in faith, **‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’ (Matthew 25:40).**

Let's show that love by sharing that love! Every person needs **love**. Every person needs **God**. And every person needs to understand the true *agape* love of God in Christ Jesus, His Son. No matter how difficult or complicated or confusing our lives can get we can remember this essential, basic truth: **God loves YOU!**—even when we do not love ourselves, **God loves us!** He proved it once and for all with Jesus on the cross of Calvary! If He did that for you, there is no doubt **God Loves YOU!** Let His love make your faith shine **(cf. Matthew 5:16)!**

“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God... This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another.” (v. 7, 10-11). Amen.