

I John 4:16-19
Love Because God Loves us

Sermon

Luton, UK, July 13th, 2013

Newcastle, August 11th, 2013

Hobart, January 9th, 2011

Devonport, January 15th, 2011

Launceston, January 16th, 2011

Scripture Readings:

I John 4:16-19

¹⁶We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.

¹⁸Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us. ¹⁹We love each other* as a result of his loving us first.¹

Mark 8:27-34 Who Do You Say that I am?

27 Jesus and his disciples left Galilee and went up to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. As they were walking along, he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

28 "Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets."

29 Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah.* "

30 But Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

31 Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man* must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. 32 As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.*

33 Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

* **1 John 4:19** Or *We love him*; Greek reads *We love*.

¹*Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. 1997, c1996 (electronic ed.) (1 Jn 4:15). Wheaton: Tyndale House.

34 Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. 35 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.

2 PETER 1 (NIV)

1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

²Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

³His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

A. II TIMOTHY 3:15-17

¹⁵You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

INTRODUCTION:

B. TRIP

1. National Church conf; Qld June
2. Ending Int. Conf. In Florida
3. Adriatic, Ireland, Scotland, London
4. Bergen, Faroes, Iceland
5. US Conference
 - a)

S.P.S:

II. LIKE TO START TODAY BY ASKING

A. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE BIBLE IS ABOUT?

1. How should we be reading it?
2. For what purpose?
3. What should we be looking for and learning from it?

B. TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK ABOUT YOUR ANSWER;

1. Then I'd like as many of us as possible to quickly give us a short title, or one two three or four word description of God

C. WE HAVE ALL HAD MANY YEARS TO GET TO KNOW GOD

1. We have heard hundreds of sermons, studied the Scriptures, prayed to him and thought about him in most cases for many decades
 - a) But before ask you to volunteer you title or description of God, let us pray

D. PRAYER

E. SO LETS GO ROUND AND SEE WHAT SOME OF OUR IDEAS OF THE BIBLE

- 1.
- 2.

III. GARY DEDDO; BIBLE AND THEOLOGY

A. WHAT THE BIBLE ISN'T

1. **Not designed to be a place for us to go to PROVE we are right on what we believe, or what others must believe.**
 - (1) So there, I am right, you are wrong, we are right, everyone else is wrong
 - b) Not a set of approved doctrinal statements that have to be agreed with
 - c) Not a list of definitive statements on every topic you can think of from history, science to human psychology and happy or successful living
 - d) It is NOT there to give us absolute knowledge, or as the source of all knowledge so we can walk by knowledge rather than by FAITH
 - (1) It is NOT there to put God in a box, to make God predictable, so we can know all about him

B. II PETER 1:3-

³ By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

⁵ In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises.

Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

1. **The emphasis is on faith seeking understanding,**
 - a) Adding knowledge and wisdom to our faith

(1) Faith is the foundation of our salvation, our relationship with God, our holiness, not knowledge, not works

b) But the new life of faith in God's love, in Jesus-- and his faithfulness to God and to us--that new life that are already established and secure in; leads us to grown in the knowledge and life of God

2. And that life is the life of love

C. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD THEREFORE BUILDS AND SUPPLEMENTS OUR FAITH

1. We come to know the One we are trusting in more and more

a) Learning of his love and faithfulness to us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit

b) What does that then lead to?

(1) Growth in and a deepening of our faith

2. This is a beautiful, dynamic spiral

a) Faith leads to understanding and knowing more about God and his life, and that leads to a greater faith and trust, and love for him, which then leads to a greater understanding etc.

D. THIS IS WHAT THE SCRIPTURES ARE THERE TO HELP US IN

E.II TIMOTHY 3:15-17

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16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

IV. LET'S THINK A BIT ABOUT HOW MUCH OUR CONCEPT, OR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD MATTERS

Mark 8:27-34 Who Do You Say that I am?

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A. ONE OF THE MOST BASIC ASPECTS OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

1. **is that what you believe about the fundamental nature of God impacts the rest of How it effects profoundly the rest of our theology; our beliefs and relationship with God**
2. **Many people start with the supposition that God doesn't exist at all**
 - a) **Others reject him because they think he is an uncaring, remote, harsh impersonal being**
 - b) **But Christians also vary in their starting point, their foundational understanding of the core of God's nature**
 - c) **E.g; Many see the central aspect of God's being, as his omnipotence, his sovereignty, and almighty power**
 - (1) **Many emphasise his being the Great King and judge**

(2) Or that his is the great all living, all powerful, creator and sustainer of all things

d) Nothing wrong with any of this. All totally true, more true that we as humans can really grasp.

(1) God is, Almighty, Omnipotent, omniscient, all powerful, the sovereign creator and ruler and sustainer of all things, the supreme judge, king and ruler of the universe.

3. But where else could we start as an even more core, prime, central and vital description and understanding of who God is at his very core and heart?

a) With God as love. The God who is love through and through.

B. LET'S CONSIDER WHAT DIFFERENCE EACH STARTING POINT CAN MAKE TO OUR APPRECIATION OF GOD, OUR FAITH, OUR THEOLOGY

1. And our day to day relationship with him

C. FIRST:

1. What sort of teachings, practices and emphasise do people and churches tend to have that start with God as primarily a God of authority and power?

a) (emphasise that we are not saying these things aren't true, or that they are unimportant).

(1) Just asking what impact it has when we begin with, emphasise or prioritise God's power and authority

b) Teachings like double predestination, emphasis on works righteousness

c) The law

d) The Bible as a rule book or manual for living

e) Making sure everyone behaves appropriately

f) Arguments over creation and evolution

g) Getting everything right in knowledge and practice

h) Judgment before mercy and compassion

2. Can you think of any people or groups in Scripture who saw God in this way, and emphasised these things?

a) Pharisees

b) Job's friends

- c) Many of the Kings of Israel
 - d) Judaizers, Gnostics, and other legalistic teachers in the early church
 - e) Strict Calvinists
 - f) Most fundamentalist groups, including us
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V. NOW LET'S CONSIDER THE OTHER STARTING PLACE WE DISCUSSED

A. BEGINNING WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AS FUNDAMENTALLY AND AT THE CORE OF HIS VERY BEING, THE GOD WHO IS LOVE

1. The God whose every thought and action begins and ends with love
 - a) We are then led to understand all that he has said, and done, and promises to do from the foundational motivation of love.
 - b) We see that he always uses all his omnipotence, power and authority in love
 - c) He has created all things in and out of love.
2. We come to see that all his promises are given because he loves us all unconditionally, totally and without limit or end
3. We look forward to the future, no matter how we have failed, or how bad life or the world around us may get, knowing, having faith that our God's love will in the end will win out over all that stands against his loving intent and purpose for all he has created

B. SO HOPEFULLY WE CAN SEE HOW IMPORTANT IT IS WHERE WE START, AND WHAT WE UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE CORE NATURE AND BEING OF OUR GOD

1. Where we start in any endeavour has a huge emphasis on the rest of our journey
 - a) When walking around London...
2. If we start with the wrong area code when making a phone call
3. And even more importantly with people;

- a) Or with the wrong assumption about the motives of a boss, or a friend, it can have lasting effects on our trust, faith and overall relationship with that person
-

VI. SO THE PLACE WE SHOULD ALWAYS START IN LOOKING AT ANY ISSUE, IS WITH GOD

A. WHO GOD IS

1. When we hear and see and begin to understand who God reveals himself to be, we begin to have a solid foundation for our lives
2. For finding real love and care in God himself
3. For understanding who we are, and our meaning and purpose in life

B. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO BE A GOD OF LOVE

1. The Father, Son and Spirit mutually love, respect and serve one another
2. Jesus came to reveal who God is to us
 - a) To show us what he is like, his loving, caring nature, his mercy, generosity, grace and forgiveness
 - b) And his wonderful plan for our lives with him for eternity

C. WE ARE MADE TO BE LIKE GOD

1. Not to look like him in some physical way, because God is Spirit
 - a) But to be like him in nature
 2. To be loving, respectful, generous, gracious and forgiving beings
 - a) Living in close, intimate relationship first of all with God
 - b) And secondly with our fellow human beings
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VII. I JOHN 4:16-19

¹⁶We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him.

1. The answer to so many of the problems people experience is right here

a) Knowing how much God loves us, and relying on him

- (1) not on others, vainly and often destructively clinging to and trying to extract peace and happiness out of others
- (2) and not by becoming isolated, avoiding relationships

B. JOHN BOILS IT DOWN EVEN MORE

God is love

1. The Beatles sang, "All You Need is Love"

a) But as another song puts it, we tend to go "looking for love in all the wrong places"

2. We need to always start thinking about any topic with the foundational understanding that God is love

a) Not that God is powerful, or a great judge or king, or that he is omnipotent and omniscient

- (1) These are all true, but if we start off with them, and not with his primary trait of love, we tend to end up with a distorted view of God
- (2) Which then leads us to have a wrong view of life and ourselves, and God's way of approaching life and its issues

b) In the past we have tended to look at Christ's dramatic return on a white horse using power and force to solve the world's problems

c) Instead of remembering John 3:16

- (1) That God sent his son to die for us out of love
- (2) That the solution to our problems is found in the love of God pictured by Jesus' supreme act of loving sacrifice for us on the cross

C. BECAUSE GOD IS LOVE, LIFE IS TRANSFORMED

1. This is the same yesterday, today, and in the future

2. The solution to our personal issues and the issues of the world are all found in the fact that God is love

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

3. We are called to experience and live in God and his love

a) To know and experience God's love

¹⁷ And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.

D. THE MORE WE KNOW AND LIVE IN GOD

1. The more our love and faith grows

a) Our fears are removed, because we see God as he really is, not as we feared him to be

b) We don't have to be afraid of him, or of life, or other people because God loves us, and we have our fulfilment and identity in him

¹⁸ Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear.

2. As we saw earlier, fear leads to many people either clinging to others for fear of being alone, or staying away from relationships for fear of being hurt

18b If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us.

3. When God's love dominates our minds and strengthens and encourages us, we become confident and at peace with God and ourselves

a) And as the John goes on to add;

¹⁹ We love each other* as a result of his loving us first.

4. Note: Or *We love him*; Greek reads *We love*.

5. We are no longer alone, and desperately needy or fearful

a) We are filled with God and his love

(1) We have a healthy and life enhancing relationship with him

(2) Which leads us to be like God and be able to love as well

* *1 John 4:19* Or *We love him*; Greek reads *We love*.

(3) To love him, and to love others

6. Stephen Seamands talks about this and what is called "attachment theory", which shows;

Like the persons of the Trinity, human selves in proper relationships, rooted in love and characterized by dynamic interdependence, are never separate from one another nor subsumed by one another.

However, because we typically operate out of fear and self-protection rather than love, attachment theory sees us falling into two unhealthy relational styles. The first "finds its security in an overemphasis on relationships." Those who follow this strategy "often cling to sources of security and demand responsiveness, especially in times of distress."

The second "finds its security in separation from others." Those who adhere to this strategy are "often counter-relational and may over-invest in what must be done around them rather than persons, particularly in difficult times"...

Instead of living in a place of secure attachment, our self-protective efforts rooted in fear drive us either toward preoccupation with attachment (defensive dependence) or avoidance of attachment, (defensive independence).

CONCLUSION:

A. TO CONCLUDE; READ OUR PASSAGE AGAIN

¹⁶We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in him.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. ¹⁷And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we are like Christ here in this world.

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1. Let us then, continually seek God's help through his Spirit, his Son the living Word, and his written word

a) To see how foundational and vital it is to understand that at the core of his being God is love

(1) And to be aware of the wrong emphasise in doctrine and Christian living a primary focus on other attributes of God can mislead us into

b) As Paul says in I Corinthians 13, impressive works, clever words, and even self sacrifice—are nothing without love

(1) Leaders can tend to become so focused on getting people to do the 'right thing' to be 'obedient' that the weightier, abiding matters such as mercy, grace and forgiveness get pushed aside, and we see more of the fruits of the flesh, such as judgment and condemnation, rather than, mercy, patience, gentleness and kindness.

2. Let us more and more know how much God loves us, and put our trust in him

a) Through Jesus and the Holy Spirit; Let us allow him to live his life of love in and through us and out to others

b) Lets allow the security of God's love for us, and the solid relationship we have with him cast out our fears

c) and free us to live more healthy and life giving relationships with one another

d) And let us pray that God will use us, and our church community to share more of the real Godly love and healthy relationships so many people around us so desperately need

B. PRAYER
