

Real Love – You and Others 1 John 4:11-12

Over the past few weeks, we have been working our way through a series titled: **Real Love**. The first two weeks of this series centered around 1 John 4:7-10 and helped us better understand and appreciate just how much God loves us. Not only does all of creation teach us this, but also His Word, and His Son, Jesus Christ. As we saw last week Jesus not only told us about His love, but He also demonstrated a perfect and sacrificial love for us on the cross. I've made this statement each week of this series because I feel it's important to give praise to God for all that He does for us. Thank you, God, for the gift of Jesus!

When we think about the first two messages in this series, we can know that "God is love", and that He demonstrated the highest level of unconditional and sacrificial, "*agape* love" for us through His Son. As we move forward, this week and next we are going to look at how the love of Christ should be impacting us daily and how the world around us can know where it is, our heart truly belongs. Is it with Christ or with the world?

Let's begin by going back to 1 John 4 and read verses 11-12. **Read 1 John 4:11-12** These verses teach us a few things. First, we see how important it is for us to allow the love of God to penetrate every aspect of who we are. If we just look at how John explains it here, we should conclude that God's love, His abiding love, lies at the heart of our Christian witness. John, by sharing these words with us, is putting this idea into practice. Through John's teaching we see a fulfilment of both the teachings of Moses as well as the teachings of Jesus on display as we are reminded of the second portion of the greatest commandment given to us. I'm not sure if you realize this or not, but every true believer, both Jew and Gentile have been commanded to love others! What John really wants us to see in chapter 4, verses 7-12 is this:

- A. True love originated with God. "God is love" (verse 8)
- B. This love was manifested for all people through His Son Jesus. "He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (verse 10)
- C. Now, this same love is to be demonstrated, put on full display, to the world through the followers of Christ. "We also ought to love one another" (verse 11)

The abiding love of Christ begins with the believer, extends through the believer to those inside the church as well as those on the outside. The loving testimony of Jesus Christ must be on display through the words and actions of His followers. God's love is shown through His Church. Or, should I say, it should be. If we understand this and truly desire to allow the love of our Savior to impact us daily, then we must embrace and be willing to allow, as John states here in verse 12, the love of God to abide in us and perfect us. Not for selfish means either, but solely for the benefit of others. I think we need to look at another passage from John's Gospel because it will help us understand this idea more fully.

Look with me at John 13. Jesus, in His final days, provided some very deep and very rich instruction to the disciples as He prepared them for His coming death, burial, and resurrection. We are going to look at a few of His words at the beginning of what is referred to as the Upper Room Discourse which includes chapters 13-17 of John's Gospel. **Read John 13:34.** "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to*

love one another.” Here, we see Jesus, just after washing the disciple’s feet, repeat something the disciples had already heard. In fact, even for us now, if we’re not careful, we can overlook this valuable lesson. Does this sound familiar to you? It sounds very similar to what Jesus said when the pharisee’s attempted to trap Him in matters concerning the Law of Moses. I mentioned this last week from Mark 12:30-31, where Jesus answered the test by informing them about the two greatest commandments. Jesus’ response in that moment comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, where Moses was providing instructions concerning the Laws of God to the people of Israel. **Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5.** As a side note, I think we need to take the time to read more of Moses teaching here. **Read verses 6-7.** You see, Moses wanted the people to understand the importance of the command that he had been given to share with them. Moses instructed the people to know the command, make it a huge part of their everyday life, and then teach it to their children and all the following generations. Jesus, as we see in verse 34, was being a good steward of the Law and was continuing to teach the disciples about this important command. Jesus wanted them, and he wants us to comprehend the enormous significance of this command to love God first, and then love others also. So much so that He provides a more in-depth version of this command. What does He say here that is different than what we find in Deuteronomy, or in the accounts from Matthew, Mark, and Luke? He says, **“love one another, just as I have loved you.”** If you are like me, you’re thinking, how could I possibly ever love someone with the same love and in the same manner as Christ loves? It seems like an insurmountable task, doesn’t it? For the disciples, and for many of us still today, we just cannot comprehend exactly what it is Jesus wants from us. This must be one of those finite vs infinite moments of our faith, right?

Not exactly! As disciples of Christ, we were created to receive God’s love and in return express God’s love by following this command to love one another. This can be much easier to say than it is to do. For us to live in a way that the perfect love of God is constantly demonstrated requires a great deal of effort on our part. I want you to glance up to the beginning of John 13. What very familiar event is described for us? That’s right, just before Jesus made the statement about love, He had just demonstrated what is required to live out this command by washing their feet. This was unusual during Jesus’ time because an honored guest would never do this. Normally, this lowly task would be assigned to a lowly servant of the house, but in this moment, Jesus, through a very real demonstration, taught them about true humility and servanthood. It’s not ironic that just after Jesus washed their feet and then predicted His death that He instructed them to *“love one another, just as I have loved you”*. He wanted them to know humble servanthood and willingness to die on their behalf was tied together as the way in which they were to follow this great command. Jesus spoke these powerful words to the disciples present in that room, but He also intended for the words to pass down from generation to generation of believers for the same purpose; To teach us the importance of living a life where our love is genuinely self-sacrificing, servant-hearted, and unconditional in nature. Look at verse 35. **Read John 13:35.**

The world around us will know that we belong to Jesus through the way we love them. Those we know, as well as those we do not. Loving as Jesus loves requires life-long learning. It requires a daily commitment to Him. It requires a life of humility. It requires a heart bent towards serving. It requires selflessness. It requires boldness of faith. It requires us to share the message of Christ. When we love like Jesus, we remove any doubt about who it is we belong to. What an honor it is

to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to love like Jesus loves! When you dig deep into the Scriptures, you'll discover that the love of Jesus was counter-cultural, it was focused on authentic obedience, it was centered around putting others above self, and it was good in every way. Jesus walked this earth teaching, serving, and embracing people. Jesus tore down barriers, He spent time with the outcasts, He met people where they were, and all along the way invited those who chose to follow him to do the same. Out of his deep love for us, Jesus spoke truth and brought the message of repentance and eternal life into reality. Jesus modeled humility as he lovingly washed the feet of the disciples, and when he went to the cross, he made the greatest sacrifice out of love known to humankind. We'll never have to die for the sins of every human being, because Jesus already did that. Instead, we get to live for an eternity with him. For now, we get the opportunity to love others with a love that is pure, selfless, and inviting.

The words of Jesus found in John 13:34 are not words of impossibility but are words of encouragement to go and walk in his ways rather than our own. It is an invitation to love beyond us, and to focus on the interests of others. To love as Jesus loves means we will live the most fulfilling and satisfying versions of our lives, knowing that we furthered the kingdom of God every step of the way.