

## **LOVE EXTENDED: GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE WORLD – John 13:34-35, Matthew 5:43-48, Acts 2:42-47, 1 John 4:19-21**

### **Introduction**

Over the past three weeks, we have traced the movement of God's love across human history.

Learning that authentic love is not a human invention helps us better understand how God's love flows directly from God's character. It is true that "*God is Love*"! Taking this information further, we learned that God's love took on flesh, knelt in humility, and went to the cross. Jesus, who is God's Son, is the perfect example of how love manifested itself into the world. Sending Jesus to save the world was God's love plan from the very beginning. Then, last week, we discovered that **the Holy Spirit transforms us by love**, reshaping our hearts from the inside out. But this is not love as we normally define it. It is God's essence, His character, His Holy traits, working in our hearts to change us from who we once were into the person God wants us to be.

Keeping all these things in mind, we now come to the final message of our series; **Love Extended: God's People in the World.**

Much of the lost world is no longer impressed or even convinced by our intellectual arguments, our buildings, or our programs. I don't want you to be discouraged by this, however, because there is a younger generation that is desperately seeking the truth. You know, Jesus teaches us that the world will know we belong to Him by one thing – our love. Today, we will explore how God's love moves outward through His people into a world desperate for hope.

### **Love Is the Mark of True Discipleship**

#### **Read John 13:31–35**

Jesus gives the disciples a new commandment – one that was not new in concept but is new in quality: "**Love one another as I have loved you.**" Again, this is nothing you haven't heard before, but it is something to be freshly reminded of. If you think back over some of the key components from the previous messages in this series, I pray that you recognize what is meant by "*God is Love.*"

And this love is: Sacrificial – Forgiving – Patient – Reconciling – Persistent

Here, as recorded for us by John - Jesus ties the credibility of our witness to the quality of our love. The world around us will not evaluate or consider our theology unless they have first experienced our love. God's love, which is working in us, poured out to others in the same manner that Jesus displayed for us. If the love of God does not mark our lives, our message has no power.

## **Love Breaks Boundaries**

### **Read Matthew 5:43–48**

This passage is usually difficult for Christians to process because it contrasts with what our normal response is towards those who often oppose us. Here – Jesus pushes love beyond comfort zones. His words, “love your enemies” and “be perfect” challenge our natural human instincts, cause us to question our understanding of justice, and often create tension over handling of severe sins such as child abuse, sexual assault, and murder. These commands are perhaps the most countercultural commands in Scripture. These verses ask Jesus’ followers to a radical love that is reflective of God’s character. Jesus teaches love, prayer, and goodwill not only to friends but also to enemies and adversaries. In do so, His teaching exposes God’s indiscriminate grace, revealed in blessings lavished on both righteous and unrighteous. Perfection in this context means mature, wholehearted love that reflects the Father’s mercy and challenges us to embody divine love in our everyday relationships.

Today, as we reflect on this, we should consider - *Who counts as “enemy” in my life and community? What does “love” look like toward that person? How can Jesus’ example of “perfect” love shape my responses?*

## **Love Builds Community**

### **Read Acts 2:42–47**

The early church did not grow through marketing strategies or political power. It grew through love.

These verses describe the early church as one shaped by devotion, generosity, and shared life rather than influence or power. It was believers gathered around sound teaching, fervent prayers, fellowship meals, meeting one another’s needs and holding onto possessions loosely. Their radical love formed a visible, compelling community that stood in contrast to the surrounding culture. As they lived like family, God used their love-filled witness to draw others to faith. These early followers demonstrated how an authentic Christian community, because of their love for Jesus and each other can powerfully proclaim the gospel message to the community around it. A loving church is one of the most powerful apologetics the gospel has. That is the challenge set before us today Mt Freedom. Will we focus on how much we love Jesus and then allow that love to work? Yes, in here, but out there – too!

## **Love Sends Us into the World**

To close our time together today and to bring our series to a close, let’s go back to where we started and look at **1 John 4:19–21**.

John reminds us that love is not a suggestion but the inevitable response to having first been loved by God. *“We love because He first loved us”* means divine love reshapes our instincts and

intentionally moves us from our comfort zones. Divine love compels us to cross racial lines, political divides, and socioeconomic barriers, all while moving towards the overlooked, the wounded, the forgotten, and yes, sometimes, our enemies. God's love was never meant to terminate in us. It was meant to saturate us and then flow through us, becoming visible to the world around us in how we love others.

## **Conclusion**

If this is true for us as individuals, it is exponentially true for the church. God's love, divine love, authentic love was never meant to be contained within the walls of the church. It was meant to flow through the church and into the world.

Remember

God defines love.

Jesus embodies love.

The Spirit transforms us by love.

And now—we get to extend that love.

When we love like Jesus, the world cannot help but see Jesus. He asks us to desire this form of love and to live our lives with this in mind. To pursue His righteousness. To love boldly and to let God's love move through you.

I want to leave you with some questions designed to help you reflect on the messages in the series.

- Where have I allowed God's love to stop with me instead of flowing through me?
- Who in my life is hardest to love—and what might God be inviting me to learn through them?
- In what ways does our church reflect the love of Jesus to those outside its walls?
- How might pursuing righteousness reshape how I engage my community?
- What would change if I genuinely believed love was our most powerful witness?
- Where is the Spirit calling me to love more boldly and sacrificially?