

Real Disciples (9): Love Made Complete

(1 John 4:7-21)

I. Introduction

- A. Years ago, I preached a sermon one Sunday night on judgment and hell
1. I'm not usually a hellfire-n-damnation guy, but sometimes Paul is.
 - a. Afterward, one of our members came running up and shook my hand
 - b. He said that he really enjoyed that sermon (*definitely **not** my intention*)
 - c. He said, "*I get so tired of all these mamby-pamby love sermons!*"
 2. He wouldn't have enjoyed series in **1 John** (*he didn't really enjoy much*)
 - a. Jesus called John (along with James) "*the sons of thunder*" (**Mk 3:17**)
 - 1) In **Luke 9:51**, Jesus begins his trek toward Jerusalem and cross
 - 2) He isn't received by Samaritans; John wants to call fire from heaven
 - b. We know John not as "*Son of Thunder*" but rather "*the Apostle of Love*"
 3. Over and over, John repeats "*love one another*" (**3:11, 3:23, 2 John 5**)
 - a. In fact, this phrase "*love one another*" appears 21 times in English NT
 - 1) 5 times in John's gospel— three in Jesus' new command (**13:34-35**)
 - 2) Seven more are in **1,2 3 John**, including 2 in our text for today
 - b. Ridenour tells of tradition of John as old blind man carried into church
The faithful gathered around to hear a word from their beloved leader, and the word was always the same— "Little children, let us love one another"
- B. So John likes those "*love sermons.*" Why was my friend so turned off?
1. Well, he was a bit odd! Maybe he'd seen love used to say something else
 - a. **Truth Is Relative:** "*It doesn't matter what we believe of Jesus as long...*"
 - 1) God loves too much to condemn people because they reject Jesus.
 - 2) As long as one is sincere Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim (*Baal worshipper?*)
 - b. **Obedience is Optional:** "*God loves me and He just wants me happy*"
 - 1) If God really loves me, then He will accept me just like I am.
 - 2) Maybe that's what he meant by being tired of those "*love sermons.*"
 2. John has **three main points**—first two are faith in Jesus and obedience
 - a. But the third point that he stresses over and over—love one another
 - b. In our text, John ties the command "*love one another*" to three things

II. Love Made Complete

A. Nature of God: Because Love is of God and God is Love (**1 John 4:7-8**)

1. This isn't simply that God is loving—he defines love, it comes from Him
 - a. John doesn't say that love is ALL there is to the nature of God
 - “God is *spirit*, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (**John 4:24**)
 - “God is *light*; in him there is no darkness at all” (**1 John 1:5**)
 - “Worship God with reverence and awe, for our God is a *consuming fire*” (**Heb 12:28-29**)
 - b. Here John says “God is love,” and then he repeats fact... *stronger* (**4:16**)
¹⁶And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.
 - c. There is a play on words here... that the NIV tries its best to disguise
 - 1) **Verse 7** begins with **double-dose** of love, “Beloved, let us love”
 - 2) That is basically the point—“Because we are loved, then we love”
2. Stott suggests that John isn't saying ONE of God's many activities is love
 - a. Everything that God does is done out of love—even when he judges
 - 1) God's love **exposes sin** (*He is light*) and also **judges sin** (*He is fire*)
 - 2) God does that in a way to offer life and hope to sinners (**He is love**)
 - 3) And through love we can face judgment **without fear** (**1 Jn 4:17-18**)
 - b. Everything that God does, He does out of love... *because God is love.*
3. John's point here is **motivational** and not merely **informational**.
 - a. He isn't telling us “God is love” but that “God is love” means something
 - b. My attitudes and behavior toward others must reflect this love of God.

B. Example of God: Because God gave us His Son (**1 John 4:9-10**)

1. God didn't just SAY that he loves us; He SHOWS His love in ACTION
 - a. The word “show” (NIV) means “*cause to be seen, displayed, revealed*”
 - b. This is the old expression “made manifest.” Point is that love is seen!
 - 1) Is it **abstract** to think of God's divine nature as motivation to love?
 - 2) Well, John points to something **concrete** and tangible—**the cross!**
 - c. Remember, false teachers deny Jesus came in flesh— so deny the cross
 - 1) John says that we see the love of God most clearly at Calvary.
 - 2) And we are compelled to love other because of the love at cross.

2. You know, it's important to show love by our actions—words can be cheap
 - a. It's important to say "I love you" but without action, "*talk is cheap*"
 - 1) I remember reading a love letter one young lady wrote her beloved

Dear John, I love you. I have always loved you. I don't know how I could have been so blind as to ever leave you. Larry meant nothing to me; it is you that I love. Can you ever see it in your heart to forgive me? Take me back and we can always be together in love. P.S. Congratulations on winning the lottery.
 - 2) Talk is cheap unless it is combined with actions. Love is a verb!
 - b. Let's read the Golden Text of the Bible together (**John 3:16**)
 3. Do we *really* believe that? Well, there's one acid text that prove if we do
 - a. If we believe in the love of God at cross, we'll LOVE ONE ANOTHER
 - b. Again, that's John's point—not the cross, but what the cross means.
 4. Look at Communion. What is the biggest mistake we can make in Supper?
 - a. Wrong day? Wine vs Juice? Who passes elements? Is it OK to sing?
 - b. Sometimes we act as if these are the critical issues. Not even mentioned!
 - c. However, there was critical issue in communion at Corinth (**1 Cor 11:27**)

²⁷ *Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.*

 - 1) Problem? In context, the real issue was their lack of love and unity
 - 2) The wealthy ate their feast and did not wait for or consider the poor
 - 3) Their communion failed to "*recognize the body of the Lord*" (**11:29**)
 - d. Was that such a big problem? Paul says that it was FATAL (**11:30**)
 5. John's second reason why we must love one another is the cross
- C. Presence of God:** Because God Lives in Us through Love (**1 John 4:11-12**)
1. God's love was demonstrated historically in the PAST at the cross
 - a. But God's love is not something that happened then—He loves forever
 - 1) Miracles of the OT aren't to show how powerful God WAS but IS
 - 2) And the cross doesn't show us how much God LOVED but LOVES
 - b. God's love remains a present reality—we see and experience it daily
 - 1) The sun comes up in the morning because God continues to love us
 - 2) We see His love daily, "*every good and perfect gift*" (**James 1:17**)
 - c. Clifford tries to remind us that God is good— and good all the time!

2. John makes the self-evident point that “*no one has seen God.*” (**4:12**)
 - a. We can’t see God; He is “*King eternal, immortal, invisible*” (**1 Tim 1:17**)
 - b. Even if we could see God, we couldn’t see God... and live (**Exo 32:20**)
3. OK, so what’s the point? No one can see God, but why bring that up here?
 - a. Because people DO SEE GOD when God’s children love one another
 - 1) We can’t see the wind, but we can see the impact of the wind
 - 2) We can’t see God, but we can see the impact of God on others
 - b. Today God is seen through the loving obedience of his children
 - 1) God has chosen to no longer to shake the mountains or part the seas
 - 2) He no longer does handwriting on walls or turns sundials backward
4. God chooses to make His presence known in the world when WE LOVE
 - a. Has our refusal to love one another silenced God’s witness to world?
 - b. Has our inability to love each other kept us from reach out to the world
5. **SONG**: John’s basic plea of Christian discipleship is Love (**1 Jn 4:7-8**)

III. Conclusion

- A. **Question**: Does God care what happens in the lives of broken people today?
 1. Does God want to heal lives broken by alcohol and drug abuse?
 - a. Does God care for those without food, clean water, clothing or housing?
 - b. Does God care about healing racial tensions and bringing people closer?
 - c. Does God want to reclaim lives twisted by their own sinful choices?
 2. **Fact**: God’s work in the world comes through us (**Matt 25:343-36**)
 - a. God’s love in these area is ministered to the world through his children
 - b. What keeps us from following? Is it a lack of faith? Is it a lack of love?
- B. John ends with words so clear we cannot possible miss them (**1 John 4:19-21**)
 1. We can’t love God unless we love others as well. Why? **Three reasons**
 - a. **Nature of God**: Love comes from God and God’s very nature is love
 - b. **Example of God**: God’s love cause Him to give us His Son
 - c. **Presence of God**: God lives in us through His love
 2. What will we do? Love other people... or give up claim to love God.
 3. When you get right down to it, those are our only two choices!