

# St Martins C3 – October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

## *God is Love – Knowing God*

### **Sermon Notes:**

Today, we are exploring the love of God, which is declared as a central characteristic of God, sitting underneath all others.

### ***Read 1 John 4:8***

God is love. Love is amazing and we experience it in many different ways, however, God's love is much higher than our human understanding of love.

God's love is unblemished and eternal, it satisfies in a way that nothing else can. We could spend eternity and still not understand the depths of God's love.

There are many pictures of this love and today we look at three.

### **1 – Washing the Disciples' Feet**

The night Jesus was betrayed He showed the disciples the full extent of His love. He washed their feet.

### ***Read John 13:1-5***

*The love of God is active.* God removes the dirt from His disciples to show that He will do what it takes to redeem them. The love of God gets down on its hands and knees and humbly serves the world. It brings life and transforms life.

## **2 – God Dancing Over Us**

God's love is seen in the prophet Zephaniah who saw God rejoicing over His people with the joy of a dancer. God embarked on a complex and lengthy redemption of Israel. He freed them from captivity in Egypt, revealed Himself to them at Mt Sinai and travelled with them in the desert for forty years. God didn't save them just because of His purpose for them. He saved them because He cared about them.

***Read Zephaniah 3:17; Deuteronomy 29:20***

God had great affection and warmth for Israel. *God's love is exuberant.*

## **3 – The Lost Sheep is Found**

*God's love is personal.* This is not just general love for "the world." God loves each individual so much that He would leave ninety-nine righteous ones behind so that He can find the one lost one. God can love us like no other can.

***Read Luke 15:1-7***

The question is will we receive it? When humanity first sinned they began hiding from God. Many of us are hiding still. We need to recognise the shame that might be keeping us from God's love and make ourselves known to Him.

***Read Luke 11:11-13; Revelation 3:20; Romans 5:8***

Once we have decided to receive God's love we then need to simply ask Him for it. As we do he promises to give us His Holy Spirit who will reveal the love of the father to us.

## **Questions for Connect Groups:**

### Sermon Reflection:

*What stood out to you from this week's message?*

*What do you think it means that God is love?*

*Which of the three images of God's love is most evident to you, which is the least?*

### Life Application:

*What would you say if someone was to ask you to describe how God's love is superior to humans?*

*What does God's love mean to you? How important is a "love connection" with God?*

*How vibrant is your relationship with God?*

*Discuss the idea that we hide from love due to trauma, shame, and a performance mentality. What is most likely to cause you to hide from love?*

*How have you hidden from love in your relationships with others or God?*

*How can we stop hiding?*

*Pray the Holy Spirit would reveal God's love to you.*

## **Monday Devotion: Love is God's Nature**

***Read Exodus 33:12-34:8***

One of the most awesome scenes in all of Scripture plays out in Exodus 33 – 34. Moses is struggling to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. He is desperate for God to go with him and to know God more.

So, God allows His glory to pass before Moses, and He reveals to Moses His name. In doing so, He reveals His nature and His personality to Moses. In His statement, God reveals His Power, Holiness and judgment of sin, but more weight is given to the centrality of His Love.

He is the God of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, filled with unfailing love and faithfulness, lavishing love on a thousand generations.

The world we live in is a reflection of God's Power; it is the mighty work of His hands. This world is also an expression of the Holy design and order of God. We too see His judgement on sin.

However, entrenched in every quark and atom, in every sunrise and new flower, is the love of God. It is His supreme characteristic. Therefore, it is no wonder that God's love is the centre of life. As we are made in His image, that is what we are to be too. This week pray that you would be able to reflect God's character in your life and love others well.

## **Tuesday Devotion: Hear and Do**

***Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5***

Ancient Israelites had a prayer that they treated just like Christians do the Lord's Prayer. Many Israelites still say this prayer every day. It is known as "the Sh' ma", which is the first word of this verse in Hebrew, meaning "hear".

Each day they would pray and remind themselves that at the centre of their lives was Y'hwh and that He was Lord of all. They would then remind themselves that their response was to love Him in return.

"Ahavah" is love in Hebrew, and at its most basic level, it means to have affection toward someone. But biblically speaking, love is more than sentiment—it is also action. In the Sh' ma, Israel is supposed to respond to God's love by showing love to him in return with all of their heart, soul and strength. It is the most natural response there is to the things God had done for them.

We too have been shown God's great love – in fact; we have had a more pure expression of it found in the love of Jesus.

Today let us consider how our heart (our thoughts and emotions), our soul (our inner life), and our strength (the upper limits of our abilities and passion) can be entirely devoted to God in adoration and obedience; both to Him and the people He has made.

## **Wednesday Devotion: God is Loyal and Loving**

**Read Psalm 118:1-9; Psalm 94:16-18; Psalms 33:4-8;**

**Ephesians 2:4-5**

In Hebrew, *khesed* is a noun meaning “loyal love.” It occurs 245 times in the Old Testament, 75% of the time referencing God’s love. It describes a posture in the relationship that can be expressed through acts to preserve, protect, and make the relationship flourish.

In the New Testament, this concept is shown through the mercy of God. In Ephesians 2, Paul’s phrase, “rich in mercy,” is an equivalent translation of “great in loyal love.” God has shown His great love for us by giving us His grace and mercy in the person of Jesus.

However, this is not just a one-time gift. In the Psalms, God’s people were often beset by difficulties. What did they draw on to overcome these difficulties? The loyal love of God.

This week, we have been encouraging you to reflect upon the aspects of God’s nature and how they can uphold you in your moments of difficulty. We can take great comfort from the way God’s loyal love brings us hope in the toughest of times.

Today, let us also consider how we can reflect these characteristics to others who are struggling. Prayerfully consider how you can be compassionate, gracious, long-suffering and show loyal love to the people in your life you know need it the most.

## **Thursday Devotion: The Apologetic of Love**

**Read 1 John 4:7-21**

Recently, I read a fantastic article on the way love can be used as an apologetic tool to talk to others about Jesus. In the article, the author defines love as the Supreme Emotion, showing that it does not make sense as a mindless accident but only from a Christian mindset, pointing to these passages in 1 John 4, which give the definition and example of love. The author then says:

*This apologetic opportunity, perhaps underutilised, has appeal because love is a universal human experience. All humans feel, experience, give and receive love ... love is at the heart of the Christian message: to declare God is love is to acknowledge that God is Trinity. Thus, if we begin to talk about love as a concept, it creates a natural bridge for us to then speak about love as a reality in the person and works of Jesus Christ.*

*So why not be an apologist of love? Ask our friends and colleagues what they believe love to be—as this may give us opportunities to speak of the God who is love.<sup>1</sup>*

Let us not only take the opportunity to speak of this love but let us take every moment to display it through the way that we love. May our ability to do this grow more and more through the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray for people as you do so.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/love-a-surprisingly-underutilised-apologetic/>

## **Friday Devotion: Real Love**

### ***Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8***

The great passage about love in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 13. In it, we discover what love looks like. This passage is often shared at weddings, because of the way it reflects self-giving love. This is the *agape* love of God.

To begin read the passage from 4-8 and replace the word love with God. Here you see an accurate description of the love that fills the heart of God.

*Agape* love is most clearly seen through Jesus on the cross. Love, as God has shown it, is the centre of all things. It is God's nature to love, and He showed us what real love is because He gave up His life for us.

As we reflect on the cross, we thank God for all He has done and for what He revealed through His sacrifice.

We also know that God gives his Holy Spirit to those who love Him, and it is with the power of His Spirit that we can show love to others.

So, read verses 4-8 again and replace the word love with your name. How does it sound to you? There might be an area ... or two ... or three where you recognise your shortcomings. Use that knowledge as a catalyst to try and reflect the love of God more.