

John 4:7-11, 19-21 6Easter Sermon 2024

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸The one who does not love has not known God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God's love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another. . . ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, love God, whom he has not seen? ²¹This then is the command we have from him: The one who loves God should also love his brother.

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Because love comes from God

Review: We have been learning from 1 John about fellowship, about the communion of saints, about the gift of the church, and about the forgiveness of sins, Jesus the Good Shepherd, God the Gardener. And now we continue to learn about God's love which Jesus instructs and commands from John 15 and repeated here in 1 John 4:

(read 1 John 4)

Adults – do you remember your first love?

Kids – will you remember your first love?

Memorable or forgettable – we each have our own unique experiences in life. But other than sharing Jesus in common between brothers and sisters in the faith – is there anything else we need to have in common?

Well... believers. Believers are commanded to remember that our **First Love is Jesus**. Maybe we could from 1 John 4 to John 15 dial it back even further into John 3:16 as all are connected as the Word of God. So many souls know John 3:16 “**For God so loved the world...**” but do some who know those words realize the command and instruction inside of them?

We have God in common, Jesus in common, Love in common, forgiveness in common. God says, “I have loved you” ... and by his grace we can work on being more loving to our neighbor in this world.

Some believe those words but fail to take them seriously and honestly. The ‘**so loved**’ part is included in today's lesson from 1 John 4 and in fact all of 1 John should be connected together. “**So loved**” includes the timing given in today's lesson from 1 John 4. First God loved, first God saved, first God has given life through the death and resurrection of Jesus his Son of Love.

Isn't it strange that God needs to command love? You would think it should be automatic – but not for sinners. Automatic for us is sin. Automatic for us is selfishness. Automatic for young and old is the result of sin which is death. And isn't death the opposite of love?

Speaking of automatic; pet owners tell me their pets can be loyal. Loyalty is love. Love is loyalty and I believe we can't have one without the other. Loyalty to God means that we listen to God. Loyalty to God means that we follow his commands. Loyalty to God means that we belong to his family of the church together. In the same sense that animal loyalty to owners can be automatic – Christian loyalty to God should be automatic IN LOVE.

Our sinful nature would say, ‘Hey mortal enemies, let us love ourselves, because love is something you must take, something you must get, something you must hunt and conquer.’ To ignore God's command to love is to also ignore the fact that God calls us ‘dear friends.’ To ignore God's command to love is to ignore God himself. To ignore God's command to love is to be born of the Devil instead of being “born of God.”

“**love comes from God**” (7) So a forgiven life should reflect God's grace and forgiveness to others. A forgiven life should follow God's commands. A forgiven life should make sacrifices of love for the sake of others, within reason. A forgiven life needs to learn the instructions that Jesus gives as he wants us as a result of his love to share his love with others.

God commands, instructs, teaches, and tells us what we need to know, need to do, need to believe, and how we need to respond to Him. We need. God does not need and yet God in his love entered into our need, stood in our shoes, walked in our steps of temptation, pain, rejection, and finally death. Jesus trusted in God's love in our place to rescue him from death and proves God's divine love by His resurrection from death.

It is not only “**because love comes from God.**” (:7) But for the fact that LOVE is GOD. Really the Bible can be called The Book of LOVE from God. For without the Bible we would not have Baptism, we would not have communion, we would not know who God is or what he promised to do for us long ago. We would not know how much detail is inside of God’s “**so loved**” in sending his ‘**only begotten Son.**’ Unique, special, one-of-a-kind, Sovereign, The One. God is LORD – is God is LOVE. Jesus is.

And yet the mystery deepens because God through John calls us ‘**dear friends.**’ He can do that, he chooses to do that in and through and by his love. We did not chose God, God chose us (John 15:16). And so we thank God for his generosity so freely and wonderfully given.

God is love. God does love. God will love. In love God made a promise he had to keep. In love God fulfilled that promise himself. In love God now commands all who believe, depend and trust that He is Love, he now commands that we who thankfully love God should also gratefully love others. Jesus is God – and at the same time Jesus is LOVE divine.

Since God loved us so much that he went to highest extent to save us through the suffering, death and resurrection of his ‘**only begotten Son**’ we need to appreciate God’s ‘**so much**’ love given so freely and wonderfully to sinners from Jesus our Savior.

“because love comes from God.”

This is a result clause. A result clause in any language, even English, has to do with a connection between two points. A result clause is signaled in English with the words, “since, because, for, so that.” How can you tell the difference? Replace each of those words for one of the others and see if it means anything different? It means the same. (since love comes from God.... For love comes from God...) The only difference is the sound of how that specific word is used on context.

Because shows up three times in this lesson similar to the same result clause from John 3:16 “**Because God so loved...**” means the same thing as “**For God so loved.**” The source of Christian love comes from God making us loyal to Jesus’ FIRST love given to us. Because love comes from God, because love is God, we who are loved, we who are ‘**atoned by Jesus sacrifice for our sins**’ belong to a forgiving, loving God.

Jesus said about himself, “**for even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**” (Mk 10:45) Because love comes from God – God came down to serve and be the sacrifice we could never be. Because love comes from God, Jesus was sent “**into the world so that we may live through him.**” Life came down from heaven into our world of death. Love came down from heaven into our world of hate. Light came down from heaven into our world of darkness ~ and even though darkness does not understand – Jesus still came to “**seek and save the lost.**” (Luke 19:10)

Because God is love we are loved. Because God commands love believers listen. Because God loves us to the greatest extent we are saved from this life and into God’s greatest gift of extended-eternal life. This is love: This is Jesus: Jesus is love ~ “**this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us.**” (10)

Notice Jesus through the Apostle John does not say, “be nice.” He goes a step further and a even deeper by saying ‘have love’. How can we love, in a messy, broken, ruined way – because God forgives our sins with his **First love** we can work on being believers who say, “**we love because he first loved us.**” (:19) We have this command and instruction from Jesus, we have this gift of faith from God the Holy Spirit, we have this love from God the Father who through Jesus looks at us with eyes of love ~ because love comes from God.

Dear friends we are saved by God, forgiven by God, loved by God so that makes us dear children and dear friends together in God’s love. John is urging us to remain in God’s love through repentance and faith. Before we even ask – God has already first loved us through the perfect life, innocent death and wonderful

resurrection of his only-begotten Son. Because God adopts us as his special sons and daughters we love him and work at loving others for Jesus' sake in Jesus' name.

Remember that our first LOVE is Jesus. Jesus is all we need says Psalm 23, "Jesus is my Shepherd, I shall not want."