

1 John 4:7-12

This is Love...

I. INTRO

- A. We use the word love for almost everything.
- B. I love my wife. I love my kids. I love this church. I love a good steak. I love Tide or Die.
- C. The word kind of loses its meaning.
- D. John wants to help us out.
- E. In these verses, John is going to show us: love originates in God, love is demonstrated at the cross, and when that love gets ahold of a person, it begins to show up in the way that person loves others.
- F. And remember the larger question John has been helping us answer throughout this letter is, "How can I know that I really know God?"
- G. John has given us these evidences of spiritual life: a growing belief in the truth, a growing obedience to Jesus, and a growing love for God's people.
- H. And today John comes back to that third evidence: love.
- I. But before John tells us that we should love one another, he wants us to understand where that love comes from and what that love actually looks like.
- J. This paragraph unfolds in three movements:
 - 1. Love comes from God → vv. 7–8
 - 2. Love is revealed in Christ → vv. 9–10
 - 3. Love becomes visible through us → vv. 11–12

II. MOVEMENT 1: LOVE COMES FROM GOD (vv. 7–8)

- A. *[7] Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. [8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*
- B. John begins with this wonderful word: "Beloved" meaning *loved ones*
- C. That's part of our identity in Christ. We are people who have been loved by God.
 - 1. John doesn't say, "Love one another so that God will love you."
 - 2. That's the way RELIGION thinks
- D. He says, in effect, "You are beloved by God, therefore, love one another."
 - 1. Our love for others is meant to be the overflow of God's love for us.
- E. And John tells us why: "for love is from God."
- F. That's the big idea in these first two verses: **Love comes from God**
 - 1. It's not just that God DOES love. God IS love.
 - 2. Love originates in him. Love is part of his very character.
- G. Love comes from God. Therefore, then people who have been born of God should increasingly look like the God who gave them new life.
 - 1. Love isn't the cause of our salvation.
 - 2. It's an evidence of our salvation.
 - 3. Not perfectly, but progressively increasing over time

- H. That's why John can make the statement in verse 8 so strongly, "Anyone who does not love does not know God."
1. You might say, "But they go to church." John says that's not the question.
 - a) They might know church.
 - b) They might know Christian culture.
 - c) They might know the songs, the language, the rules, the do's and don'ts.
 - d) They might know a lot about God.
 2. But John says the evidence that someone actually knows God is that the character of God increasingly shows up in their life.
 3. And because God is love, his children should increasingly become people of love.
- I. Christianity isn't ultimately about religion, it's about a relationship with God, the God of love, and that kind of love changes you

III. **MOVEMENT 2: LOVE IS REVEALED IN CHRIST (vv. 9-10)**

- A. *[9] In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [10] In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
- B. "In this the love of God was made manifest among us" is a fancy way of saying, **"This is how God showed us his love..."**
1. When we weren't asking for help...
 2. God sent his only Son into the world...
 3. To be the propitiation for our sins...
 4. That we might live through him.
- C. Let's break these down one at a time.
- D. When we weren't asking for help...**
1. Biblical Christianity says that God pursued YOU. You didn't pursue him.
 2. It wasn't that we started loving God and then God responded, "Well, since you love me, I suppose I'll love you too." No! God loved first.
 3. Romans 5 says that God demonstrates his love for us in that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
 - a) And Paul goes even further: we were God's enemies.
 4. That's the condition in which God loved us.
 - a) Not cleaned up. Not spiritually impressive. Not deserving.
 5. Sin is ultimately our declaration to God: "I don't want you ruling over me. I want to rule myself. I want your world, your gifts, your breath, your food, your pleasures, but I don't want YOU."
 6. And what was God's response to rebels like us? He loved us.
 - a) This is what makes Christian love so radically different.
 - b) God did not love us because we were lovable.
 - c) God loved us because God **IS** love.
 - d) His love originates in his character, not our worthiness.
 7. God loved me at my WORST, and look what his love gave

E. God sent his only Son into the world...

1. He sent his only Son.
2. God did not send an angel, not a prophet, not the JV team
 - a) John calls him God's only Son → unique, one of a kind. This is the eternal Son through whom the world was made, the one who shared the Father's glory before creation. That's who God sent.
3. And where did he send him? "Into the world."
 - a) Remember: John uses "world" to describe a humanity that is fallen, rebellious, and opposed to God.
 - b) Jesus wasn't sent into a world that was eagerly waiting for him, but one that wanted nothing to do with him
 - c) *"The world was made through him, yet the world did not know him."*
 - d) *"He came to his own, and his own did not receive him."*
 - (1) And yet God sent him anyway
4. And yet God sent him anyway. That's love. But why?

F. To be the propitiation for our sins...

1. **A propitiation is a sacrifice that satisfies righteous wrath.**
2. Before we can understand the solution, we need to get the problem
 - a) Our problem wasn't simply that we were lonely, lacked purpose, had bad habits, or needed help with our marriage
 - b) Our problem was sin, rebellion
 - (1) We have broken God's law.
 - (2) We have rebelled against a holy God.
 - (3) And because God is perfectly righteous, he cannot simply pretend that Bill's sin doesn't matter.
3. Sometimes we imagine love and justice as opposites. "If God loves us, why doesn't he just forgive everybody?"
 - a) Well, because a God who simply ignores evil isn't loving.
4. Imagine a judge looking at someone guilty of horrific crimes and saying, "I'm a loving judge, so I'm going to pretend none of this happened."
 - a) We wouldn't call that love. We'd call it injustice.
5. God is perfectly loving AND perfectly just.
 - a) So HOW can God forgive guilty sinners without compromising his justice?
6. **The cross.** At the cross, Jesus stood in the place of sinners.
 - a) Our guilt was counted as his.
 - b) The judgment our sin deserved fell upon him.
 - c) The debt of deserved wrath was paid.
 - d) Justice was satisfied.
 - e) The wrath of God against our sin was exhausted upon Christ.
7. And now everyone who trusts in Jesus can be forgiven
 - a) not because God decided sin wasn't a big deal, but because **Jesus paid it all**

- b) This is why the cross is the clearest picture of God's love.
 - (1) God's love isn't sentimental.
 - (2) It isn't God looking down from heaven saying, "I have warm feelings about humanity."
 - (3) His love initiates, acts, sacrifices, & pays the price
- 8. The cross says simultaneously: **Your sin is worse than you think.**
 - (1) It required the death of the Son of God.
- 9. AND: **God's love is greater than you could imagine.**
 - (1) He willingly gave his Son to save you.

G. That we might live through him

- 1. And why did God do all of this? "So that we might live through him."
 - 2. Apart from Christ, we were spiritually dead, and dead people don't need advice or improvement. Dead people need life.
 - 3. And that's what Jesus gives. We are reconciled to God through him.
 - 4. We live with God now, and one day we will live with him forever.
 - 5. Jesus didn't merely die so that you wouldn't go to hell.
 - 6. He died and rose again so that you could LIVE.
- H. That is the gospel → While we had no love for him, God sent his only Son into the world... to be the propitiation for our sins.... so that we might live through him.

IV. MOVEMENT 3: LOVE BECOMES VISIBLE THROUGH US (vv. 11–12)

- A. [11] *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."* [12] *"No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."*
- B. Beloved... loved ones... IF GOD so loved you (which he has), what should you do? Love one another.
- C. In other words, the standard for how I love you isn't ultimately how you've treated me. The standard is how God has treated me.
- D. Think about everything we just saw in verses 9–10. THAT is the love John now tells us to show one another.
 - 1. I forgive because I've been forgiven.
 - 2. I'm patient because God has been patient with me.
 - 3. I sacrifice because Christ sacrificed for me.
- E. The cross doesn't just save us. The cross teaches us how to love.
- F. And this is why our love is such an important evidence of genuine faith.
- G. His love gets into us, changes us, and then begins to come out of us.
- H. Then, in v12 John ends by saying: "No one has ever seen God."
 - 1. OK...what does that have to do with loving one another?
- I. What's his point? The invisible God makes his love visible through his people.
 - 1. People can't physically see God.
 - 2. But they can see what happens when God gets ahold of a person's life.
 - a) They can see a husband lay down his life for his wife.
 - b) They can see forgiveness
 - c) They can sacrifice

- J. How is love perfected in us? Not that God's love was somehow imperfect and we improve it. The idea is that his love reaches its intended goal in us.
 - 1. The love that originated in God... Was revealed to us in Christ... And now becomes visible through us.
- K. Do you see the whole movement?
 - 1. **Love comes FROM God.**
 - 2. **Love is revealed IN Christ.**
 - 3. **And love becomes visible THROUGH us.**
- V. **CONCLUSION** → And I want to leave you with two questions.
 - A. First, for those of us who know Jesus: If God has loved you like that, how are you loving others?
 - 1. Who do you need to forgive?
 - 2. Who needs your patience?
 - 3. Who is God calling you to love even though they haven't earned it?
 - 4. Because the standard for how we love isn't how others have treated us → It's how God has treated us.
 - B. But secondly: Do you actually know this God?
 - 1. Not: Do you go to church?
 - 2. Not: Did you grow up Christian?
 - 3. Not even: Do you believe God exists?
 - C. Have you trusted in Jesus Christ?
 - 1. Maybe you've spent your life thinking Christianity is about what you need to do for God: Be better. Try harder. Clean yourself up. Become religious enough that maybe God will accept you.
 - D. But listen again: "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us..."
 - E. The gospel isn't ultimately the story of what you've done for God. It's the story of what God has done for you.
 - F. Christ has come. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Forgiveness is offered, and life is found in him. So will you trust him?
 - G. Will you turn from your sin and place your faith in Jesus Christ?
 - H. You don't have to wonder what God's love looks like. Or if God loves you.
 - I. Look at Jesus. This is love.