

When you hear the word “Love” who is the first person that comes to mind? Since today is Mother’s Day perhaps the first person you thought of was your mother. Mothers are often remembered for their love and kindness. Children have many fond memories of being on the receiving end of their mother’s love. But it probably wouldn’t take too much effort for children to remember those times when Mom wasn’t always so loving. Moms are human too. They have their moments when they get frustrated and frazzled. They have their bad days when they don’t exactly convey or show love and kindness.

As sinful people, we all fail to show a perfect love for one another and a perfect love for God. And so, when we hear the word “love” what should really come to mind is our gracious and loving God. And there is probably no one more suited to tell us about God’s love than the apostle John, who referred to himself in his gospel as **“the disciple whom Jesus loved.”** John was the one who was sitting next to Jesus in the upper room when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. John seemed to be the only disciple who was there at the cross when Jesus died. John was the one to whom Jesus entrusted the care of his mother. And John was one of the first disciples to run to the empty tomb on Easter Sunday.

Throughout his first epistle, John talks about the love of God. Since God loved us, we also ought to love one another. The best way to love one another is by sharing God’s love. We often refer to it as evangelism. When you hear the word “evangelism,” perhaps you get a bit uncomfortable. Does that mean I have to go knock on doors and tell strangers about Jesus? Is pastor going to sit up there and make me feel guilty again for not sharing the gospel with others? Well, evangelism isn’t just about knocking on doors or telling people about Jesus. As we will see in our text today, evangelism is about sharing God’s love with others, a love which we have seen and a love to which we testify.

Evangelize is a Greek word that means “to proclaim or share good news.” Evangelism is all about letting people see God’s love for them. John put it this way in our text: **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”**

Did you hear how often the word “love” was used in our text? John used it 11 times in five verses! Now, it’s great that John describes God as love but some people may wonder how can that be true? Did John’s newspapers not carry the same headlines as ours about all the mass shootings, the diseases, the natural disasters and wars? Did John never visit a hospital room and see a loved one’s life slowly slipping away? If God is so loving, why doesn’t he do something about this mess we call Earth?

First of all, let’s get one thing straight. While God created the Earth, we made the mess. It’s our own sin and selfishness; that causes such heartache and hardship. But even though we made the mess, God did something to clean it up, or at least rescue us from it. John said: **“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins”** (1 John 4:10).

Do you want to know how big God’s love is for you? Then look at the size of the sacrifice he made to save us. He sent his own son – who came as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. While it should be our own blood from God’s righteous anger coming down on us like a sledgehammer, the blood that covers us is Jesus’ blood because he stepped in and took the blow for us.

Jesus is the only person big enough to step in and take the punishment for the sins of the world. That’s why John went on to write in the verses after our text: **“...we have seen and testify that the Father has**

sent his Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). John could not remain quiet about what Jesus had come to do. For Jesus had not just come to save John from his sins, he had come to save the whole world. But how will the world know about Jesus unless we tell them about this love which we have seen? But John makes it clear that testifying about Jesus means more than talking about him. He wrote: **“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us”** (1 John 4:11, 12).

Earlier I said that it’s often hard for people to believe that God is loving. Are we Christians partly to blame for that? John just told us that the way God reveals his love to the world is through us. Do we stand out as loving people? Keep in mind, we are being watched. Your friends know you come to church. They’re watching to see how you handle yourself at work, or how you treat that friend who’s making life miserable. What are you going to do? Grumble? Complain? Your friends may never actually pick up a Bible and read it but they’re reading you everyday. What are you telling them about God? Are you sharing the Good News?

John tells us that what they should see in us, is love. The kind of love that John is talking about here is “agape” love. That’s a love that compels us to do what is best for others even though it is inconvenient or painful for us. It’s a love that cheerfully offers the last piece of chocolate cake to a sibling. It’s a love that forgives hurtful words and actions before an apology has even been offered.

“But...you may object that certain people don’t deserve that kind of love. I’ll only be nice and forgiving if he proves himself to me. I’ll only say hello once she has admitted her wrong and has apologized!” Are those the kind of thoughts that run through your mind, especially when someone has wronged you? I must confess that I have those thoughts at times. But John says something that should knock such words right out of our mouths. **He says that whoever does not love does not know God** (1 John 4:8). Showing love to one another is not “extra credit” for Christians; it’s what Christians do. If we don’t love, then we are not Christian and are not on our way to heaven.

Well then, isn’t God asking the impossible of us? But he’s only asking of us, what he asked of Jesus. Jesus, the Apostle Paul tells us, **“died for us while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8)** – not after we had cleaned up our act or at least had promised to change. “But that’s Jesus, the Son of God. I can never love like he did!” In a way you’re right. If I expect copper wires alone to power my computer, then I’m asking the impossible of them. But if those wires are hooked up to a power source, they will not only power my computer but my lamp, my coffee pot, and pretty much whatever else I want to plug into them. So it is with us. On our own, we are like cold, dead wires. But at our baptism, the Holy Spirit hooked us up to God. His love not only poured on us, it pours through us to others.

Loving others is not only possible and the right thing to do; it’s the best thing to do. I mean, how do you melt ice? You put it in the freezer, right? Of course not! You put it in the microwave or on a hot stove. So why do we think that we’ll make our lives better, more enjoyable by being cold to someone who has been cold with us? If you want to melt a frigid personality, be warm and loving towards that person. In time you’ll melt their cold heart. Look at what God’s love has done to us. It melted our hearts of ice.

Our text this morning gives us reason to celebrate God’s love. It saved us from sin. It saved us from hell! But let’s not get so caught up in celebrating God’s love for us that we forget to share it with others. Testify to that love by loving your family, your neighbors, your teachers...everyone you meet this week and the next. Love them because God loves you, and he loves them. Amen.