

(1 John #24) God's Love Expressed

by J. Glyn Owen

God's love is a special kind of phenomenon that is directed towards the unworthiest and seeks the highest good for them, and it is revealed in the giving of his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Duration: 21:44

Scripture: 1 John 4:7

Topics: "God's Love"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the incredible love and sacrifice of God for humanity. He highlights the fact that God sent His only Son into the world to be an eternal sacrifice for our sins. The preacher encourages the audience to ponder the significance of the incarnation and the mystery of God becoming flesh. He also references the passage in 1 John 4:7-8, which speaks about the importance of love and its connection to knowing God. The sermon concludes with a prayer of gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus and a reminder of the significance of His body and blood in the communion.

Transcript

In our Sunday morning worship at the present time, we are meditating on the first epistle written by Saint John, and we came last Lord's Day morning to the passage that begins with verse seven in chapter four. We dwelt only upon the first two verses in that paragraph, namely verses seven and eight, which refers to love and its relation to the divine paternity. May I read those verses to remind us of the context of our message today.

Beloved, says John, let us love one another, because love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. Now there are two matters that remain in this particular paragraph, we're going to come to at least one of them today.

Love and its perfect expression in history, verses nine and ten, and then love and the ministry that it prescribes for us as people continually in the last two verses, namely eleven and twelve. Now I want to turn to the next one then, love and its expression in history. What is love? How do we know what love is? So many people talk about love and sing about love today, what do they mean? Well, says John, herein is love, that's how he starts it in verse ten, herein is love.

Not that we love God, but rather that he loved us and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Or in terms of the previous verse, it is in this that love was manifested, the love of God toward us, because that

God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live or have life through him. Now we saw last Lord's Day morning that this love of which the apostle speaks is a very special kind of phenomenon, and it has to be distinguished from so much that goes by that name.

It's distinguished from erotic love, eros. It has nothing really to do with it. It is distinguished from that kind of love that we sometimes see in those who are desirous of showing a kind of nationalism.

They love their country to a very large extent, perhaps more than much else. It's not that kind of love. Neither, indeed, is it the kind of love that commonly obtains between parents and children, nor between husbands and wives.

That very often is limited in its scope, even if it is deep and warm. This love is a very special kind of love. This agape love, as the apostle speaks of it, it is something which is absolutely unique.

And in the verses before us today, John wants us to see exactly the kind of thing that this agape love really is. In this, the love of God was manifested among us, says John, that God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love.

Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his Son to be the atoning sacrifice or the propitiation for our sins. Now, there are three features of this kind of love that John says we see in the love of God. Let's look at them very briefly.

The first thing is, this kind of a love is love that is directed even unworthiest. In other words, it is not love that is attracted by the object, but it is love that is propelled by the compulsion of love within our own hearts. If we have this kind of love, it is in us, and irrespective of the deserts of the object, we love.

Father or mother loves child because the child belongs to him. Husband loves his wife because he has chosen her and the wife her husband. But here it is different.

This love looks into the face of unworthiness, and yet it loves. Now, this is brought out in this passage in two ways. First of all, in this word in verse nine, God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him.

Do you notice the implications of those words? The objects of God's love and concern are without life. Why are they without life? Why were they without life? Not with a natural life, this earth, providence, and the mercy of God, but without the hope of everlasting life and without a spiritual life that is capable of fellowship with God. Why were we in this condition? Because we had come under divine condemnation.

Because sin had robbed us of life and slain us. The objects of God's love here, then, are those who are condemned to death. Men and women under sentence, as all of us were by nature.

Now, that is the message. God loved us when we were in our condemned selves spiritually, dead in trespasses and sins, and await the last, final doom of the judge. We needed life, we had it not.

We were dead. God loved the dead. If you go on to verse ten, we have it in clear terms.

He sent his Son to be an atoning sacrifice or a propitiation for our sins. The word used in translating a Greek term in the Revised Standard Version is very inadequate here. It says to be an expiation for our sins, which means cleansing our sins away.

But we needed more than cleansing. The term that John used means that God's wrath was kindled against us, that he was angry with us, that he was justly angry with us, that there could be no peace between us and God in our sinful condition, and had sentenced us lawfully to be lost. We were under his curse.

But he sent the Son of his love to do all that was necessary. He should just and the justifier of them that believed in Jesus. It reflects our condition as men who were not simply dead, but who were cursed and thus utterly and completely lost.

You remember the Apostle Paul's way of expounding this same theme in Romans chapter five. God, he says, commends his love toward us. But while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

So the first thing this love is this. It is a love that seeks to do something for the unworthiest, the dead in trespasses and sins, to condemn God. God is doing something for his enemies.

For those who would crucify his Son, for those who did not want him himself. The second feature about this love is this. It is not only a love that is directed towards the unworthiest, but it also seeks the highest good for the unworthiest.

It comes down to the lowliest, to the meanest, to the outcast, and it desires to elevate the outcast and the lost to bring him to the highest loftiest place of all. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us. God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him.

Now what does that mean? We can only elucidate it briefly by saying, but let's add that it means more than some life. Life we have already, as we've indicated. Natural life we have.

But the reason why the Son of God was that we might have that kind and quality of life that would enable us to have fellowship with God in this life and to enjoy him and serve him in the next. This is eternal life, and it is not just a life adding up. It is a new quality of life.

It's the quality of life that's seen in Jesus of Nazareth. It is the very life of God himself. And insofar as that can be communicated to his creatures, God sent his Son into the world that you and I might have that life.

You see, to have fellowship with God, we must have his life. We must have his spirit. We must love what he loves, and we must hate what he hates, and we must will as he wills.

And that depends upon the quality of life. So that you see, there is nothing greater than this. God could give, God could desire nothing greater for his creatures than this.

That we should share his very life, that we should have fellowship with him, that we should be capable of enjoying his home and his heaven and his love and his service eternally, and serve him here and now with joy. There is nothing greater than this. This prepares a man for glory.

This makes a man fit to live as the representative of heaven upon earth. This is eternal life. Two elements, two features of this life then that love comes to give is this.

It is a life that is different from the life of man by nature. It's a life of kinship with God, and enables us to fellowship with him. God's his love upon the unworthiest, and he seeks for the unworthiest, the highest that he almighty God can give his creatures.

The third feature that we must notice is this. It is not only desire that God desired the highest for the unworthiest, but he procured it at the greatest conceivable cost to him. God sent his only son into the world to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

My good people, we need the spirit of God to help us to taste things in. We become so accustomed to scripture and to divine truth that it doesn't move us at all. God sent his son into the world.

Have you pondered the significance of that? Out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe. Have you ever pondered the mystery of the incarnation, what it meant for the Son of God to take to his deity of our humanity, to be contracted to a stand in the virgin's womb, to be born of a woman, to live under the law, to become a mere man among men? That's reflected in these words. He sent him into the world.

God so loved us that he sent him, and he cared. My will, said he, is to do the will of him that sent me. It isn't only that I've been commissioned, but I've come, I was consecrated to it, and I've accepted the task of my own free will.

For God so loved the world, he sent, he gave his son. Who is this, cries William Walsham, how so weak and helpless, child of lonely Hebrew May, rudely in a stable sheltered, coldly in a manger laid? And he answers, it is the Lord of all creation, who this wondrous path hath trod. He is Lord from everlasting and to everlasting.

God, great is the mystery of godliness. God manifest in flesh, veiled in flesh, the godhead see. But my text goes even further than that.

God not only sent his son into the world, God sent his only son into the world to be the propitiation for our sin. To send him to Bethlehem was a mark of imponderable grace, but Bethlehem at best was only a stepping stone to Calvary. And the lamb was slain from before the foundations of the world.

Calvary was in God's purpose before the incarnation. He sent his son into the world that his son in the world should bear our sins in his own body to the tree. These are the passages that come to mind and illuminate the significance of John's words.

He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He bore our sins in his own body to the tree. He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God.

He took the curse in our place. He bore away our sins. That's love.

Now listen, my friend. God could give nothing that would cost him more than that. For he gave his son.

He gave his only son. And he was so intimately related to his son that in the giving of his son he came himself. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

That's love. Now what then is the quality of this love that is revealed once for all in human history? That John says of it, here it is, he says, not in anything else, not in anything that we have or we show or we do, but here it is. Not that we love God, but that God loved us.

There it is. It was a love that settled upon the most undeserving people in their most miserable and lost estate. It was a love that sought to bring men from the lowest dungeon of despair and of lostness to the highest experience of life everlasting.

And it was prepared to pay the costliest price to do that for the unworthy and the undeserving. Herein is love. Men and women, brothers and sisters in Christ, I hope there is something in your heart this morning that rejoices that God so loved you and loved me.

There is some dancing in our spirits that acknowledges the wonder of this love. Here it is. And it is this that beckons us this morning to the table.

Oh, wondrous love to bleed and die. And bear the cross and shame that guilty sinners such as I might plead thy precious name. To all who own Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we extend a welcome to the table today.

Join us. This is his table. If you have come to him whose love is so great and unqualified and have tasted and seen of his grace and salvation, come and partake of the cup and of the bread we thanksgive you.

Let our hearts together worship the Father who gave the Son and the Son who gave himself and the Spirit who made over the things of Christ to us so that Christ of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption. Let us pray. Holy Heavenly Father, there is an awesomeness that creeps into our souls as we realize the depth of our misery outside of Jesus Christ.

Rarely do we dare to look into the mirror of thy word and read the glaring truth. But here it is. In our own blood we wallowed.

In the miseries of rebellion we wandered. Far away from thee we enjoyed our sin and were unlovely. But while we were yet sinners, Christ, thine only Son, well-beloved of thyself, died for thee unlovely.

We thank thee, Father, for the measure in which in our acceptance of him we have begun to enjoy life in our souls that we never had before. And this morning as we come to the table we see again the elements that remind us of that stark reality that our life could only be purchased at the price of his blood. His body was broken and his blood was shed.

We ask now that thou wilt give to each one of us the grace of gratitude so that as we partake it is with faith in him that will enable us to live by his life even as we are redeemed by his death. Oh, to draw by faith the sustenance of his everlasting life by the Spirit even at this time. Grant us now, therefore, the grace we need and lead us in thy way for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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