

God is love and that is a **love** that is **demonstrated** through the sacrifice He made on the cross. But that is also a **love making a difference** in the life of others.

B.ILL—John (sons of thunder; wanted to call destruction on an unbelieving city; now, apostle of love; what a difference!) When we react to God's love and sacrifice with belief and love of our own, we are transformed. I'm sure the people here would stun you with stories of the men and women that they were before Christ saved them.

1JN 3.17-18 ~ *In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*

Before we were baptized, our fear was intense; we did not have the confidence of God's forgiveness and salvation. But over time, God's love makes us whole and complete; we no longer need to be fearful of what awaits us beyond the veil of death because that veil has been lifted to us! This was what had happened to John! Over time, the fear that had previously existed between him and God and had motivated his service had gradually been replaced by a committed love toward the Lord. We know that heaven is awaiting those who wait for Him. Because of this, we can truly live and changed and different life.

V. Conclusion

We have our work cut out for us. There are so many ways that we can improve, and so many ways we can grow in our love. I don't need to make a checklist of a hundred things we need to do. I think all of us here this morning are smart enough to figure it out. We look at our brothers and sisters, we look for the face of Christ in that brother or sister, and then we treat them as we ourselves would like to be treated.

God is loved defined, and that love is the kind that is **demonstrated** through a life of sacrifice and service. If we live such a life, we will find our lives changing as the **love of God makes a difference** in our own life.

VI. Invitation

If you are not a Christian, we would like to invite you to experience what it is really like to be born into God's family here on this earth. It is a growing and learning process. We obey the gospel by being buried with Christ in baptism—into His death—and then we are raised up to walk as brand new additions in God's family. If you are ready to confess Jesus as the Son of God and then be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins, you can let us know right now as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

TRN 2 1JN 4

I. Introduction

ILL—Prevalence of Love (Amazon.com-books-65645, music-13810; Google-164 million) It is unmistakable how important love is in the world around us. In fact, throughout history, people have written about, sung about, and thought about love more than perhaps any other single human need.

And yet with all of this information available, love continues to be a very confusing subject. We can look at popular culture, we can scan the newspapers and the Internet, and it is abundantly clear that our society has a very poor understanding of love. **In fact, as a society, we are so confused about love, who is to say what love really is?** And so, we turn to God for the answer and He tells us **“That’s simple. Love’s me.”** And our response to that is **“Yes. That’s great, but what does it mean?”** What does it mean when we say that God is love? It is amazing that this three word statement can prove to be both so simple and profound.

1JN 4.7-21 (READ)

This morning, we discussed how we are to have love for our brothers and sisters and how this love is to be a sacrificial love. Tonight, we are going to look at the very fount of love, Himself: God. So much of what the world views as love today has nothing to do with the true and pure love that we see in our heavenly Father. In the world around us where love is so often dismissed or misunderstood, it is important to understand what love is in its purest definition: **God is love defined, demonstrated, and making a difference.**

II. God is Love Defined

1JN 4.7-8 ~ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

DEF: John does not say that God loves, or that God is loving, or that love is some quality that God possesses; John says that **God is love defined**—if you understand God, you understand love; if you understand love, you understand God. Everything that God does, everything that He is, all of His attributes and actions are filled with and motivated by love.

PROBLEM: this doesn't fit within our popular definition of love. Most of us view love as that feeling we get in our stomach when we

see a cute boy or girl or that feeling of fondness and attachment that we have for family and friends. For the most part, we see something that we like in someone or that we admire in someone and that produces our love for them. **But what happens when that admirable quality fades—beauty, sense of humor, intelligence, wit?** Our “love” then fades away as well. But that is not true with God!

1. God Loved Us First

RM 5.6-8 ~ *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* God did not base His love for us upon how handsome, beautiful, funny or intelligent we were; it was not because of how Godly and righteous we were; when we were ungodly, unrighteous, enemies of God, God loved us. God loved us when we were unlovable.

LK 6.32-36 ~ *If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*

ILL—Face only a mother could love (how many times have we heard this; that’s us) We were filthy in our own sins; we had souls only the Father could love.

2. God Loves Us Forever

RM 8.38-39 ~ *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

For those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb, there is nothing that can take that love away from you. Not Satan, not his angels, not your husband, not your wife, not your boss, not your mother, not your father, not the president of the United States! God’s love for you will never be taken away from you; only you can chose to give it away.

3. God Loves Us For Us

MT 10.29-31 ~ *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*

ILL—Dating Game (couldn’t get girlfriend; told problem was too good of friend; that’s a bad thing?) But we don’t need to play the dating game with God to court His love. We already have all His undivided attention! He loves every single one of us as if there were only one of us.

AP: This makes this morning’s passage that more stunning, doesn’t it? This is the love we are to pattern our love for others after! God does not love us more because we are good or less because we are bad. God is love, and He will always love us.

III. God is Love Demonstrated

1JN 4.9-10 ~ *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.*

DEF: John is telling us not only that **God is love**, but that **God is love demonstrated** through his death on the cross. So many people say, “**I can live my life however I wish because God is love.**” But notice that God’s love was so great for humanity that He sent Jesus to die. He loved you so much that He sent His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins so that we could change. Jesus was the “atoning sacrifice” for our sins; He paid the price for our sins so that we would not have to.

Have you ever realized that what we are spending our entire lives working toward, heaven, is what Jesus was willing to leave to save us? This perfect place—full of peace and love—no sin and no darkness, no hatred or pride, no temptations, no anger; he left that beautiful place to come here. Jesus willingly came into a world full of sin and pain. While He was here, He healed people. He brought people back from the dead. He fed people. He demonstrated the love of God. And yet when it was all said and done, the same people He came to save ended up nailing Him to the cross...and He voluntarily gave up His life on that cross.

LOVE/Sacrifice/Christopher Reeve

AP: This is the kind of love that we ought to have for our husbands, wives, sons, daughters, fellow Christians, the world at large: a love that is demonstrated in the things we do and the lives we lead.

IV. God is Love Making a Difference