

Sunday 02/23/25 – Panama Methodist Church

Sermon Title: “What’s Love Got To Do With It: The Four Loves”

Series: Part 4 – “Charity” or “Agape” *Matt. 22:37-39, Matt. 5:43-46, John 21:15-17*

(Slides 1-15 will be listed in order throughout this sermon 😊!)

For the past three weeks we have been discussing the topic of biblical “love,” during this month that we have Valentine’s Day. As I have said, some consider the month of February to be the month of love. As we have discussed the past three weeks, there are four main types or categories of love in the bible, while there are eight or more words in the Greek language that are words for love. In a culture that throws the word love around very loosely, we have been talking about how we can love in different ways. This morning though, we will conclude this sermon series with the fourth and final category of biblical love. Here is our opening slide:

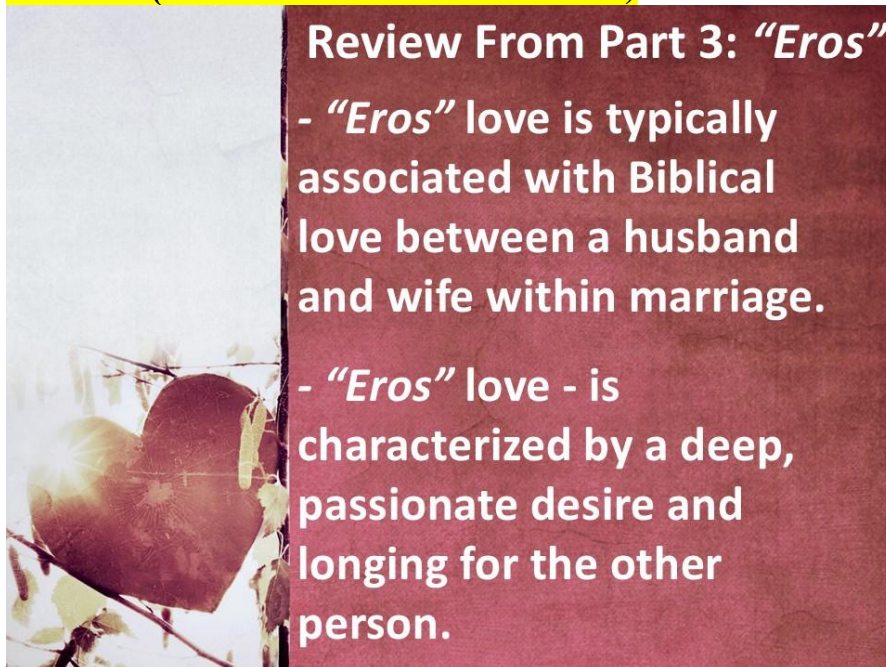
Slide 1 – (“What’s Love Got To Do With It: The 4 Loves” Series: Part 4 of 4)



“What’s Love Got To Do With It: The Four Loves” Series Part 4 of 4

Before diving in though, let us look briefly at the third kind of Biblical love that we discussed last Sunday, called “*Eros*”:

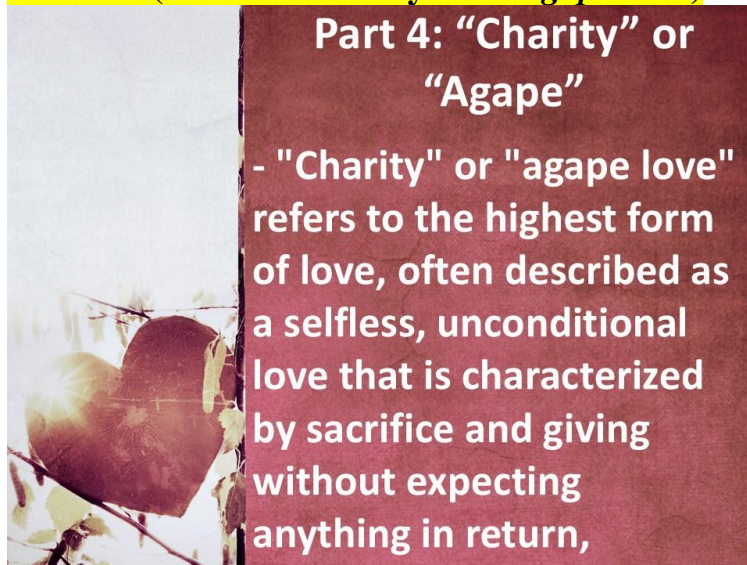
Slide 2 – (“Review from Part 3: “*Eros*”)



For those that are currently in a Christian marriage and have “*Eros*” love, may we all pray for strong marriages. May we also pray for those who are single, widowed, or hoping that God will give them that special someone to have Biblical marriage, or “*Eros*” love with. All four of the Biblical love types are gifts from God, and we should celebrate them all.

This morning, we are discussing the fourth and final type of Biblical love of “Charity” or “*Agape*” love. This fourth and final type of Biblical is the highest and biggest type of Biblical love. This is what “Charity” or “*Agape*” love is:

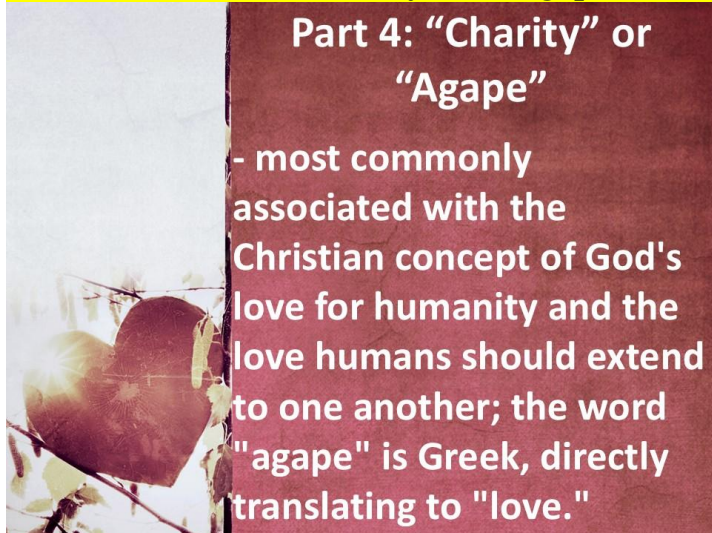
Slide 3 – (Part 4: “Charity” or “*Agape*” # 1)



Biblically speaking, this is the highest form of biblical love, as it is the love we are called to have for all people, for our neighbors, and everyone. This is not “*Storge*” love that is more family love. This is not “*Philia*” or “*Phileo*” love that is love for our best and good friends. This is not “*Eros*” love that is the love of husband and a wife. Instead “Charity” or “*Agape*” love is the love that we are called to have all of

humanity. This is love for a stranger, for a new person in church, etc. Here is further definition of “Charity” or “*Agape*” love.

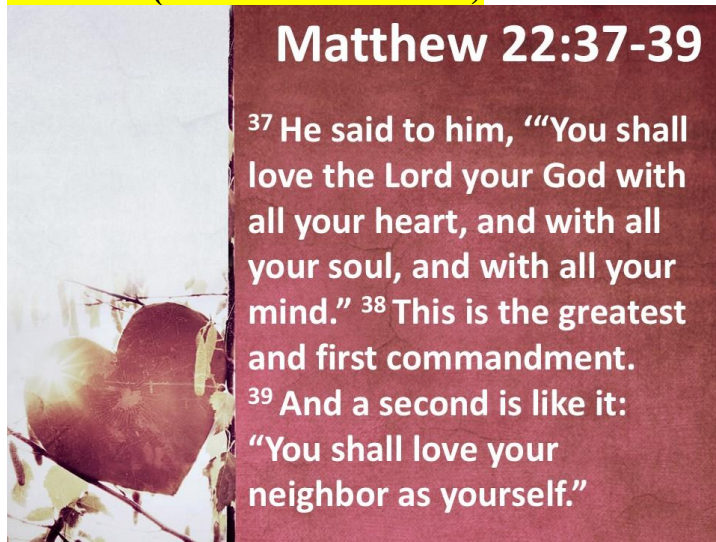
Slide 4 – (Part 4: “Charity” or “*Agape*” Love” # 2)



So, once again, this is the love that God has for everyone, and that we are called to have for each other.

One of the best examples of “Charity” or “*Agape*” love is found in Matthew 22:37-39. This is also a scripture that I believe is often misused. If you want to open your bibles or bible apps the first book of the New Testaments, the gospel of Matthew, we are going to be reading Matthew 22:37-39. Here is what it says:

Slide 5 – (“Matthew 22:37-39)



In this scripture, Jesus Christ, our Lord is talking with Jewish religious leaders. He is responding to them, in Matthew 22:37, and he gives us what is often called the “Greatest Commandment”. Love God with everything that we have. In Matthew 22:39, Jesus says after giving the “Greatest Commandment,” “a second is like.” Jesus then tells us to “*Agape*” or love our neighbor as yourself. Even further, Jesus goes on in Matthew 22:40 and says of the “Greatest Commandment” to love, and second to love our neighbors as ourselves, this:

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

Some people then would say that all we need to do is love God and love our neighbor. It is central and commanded by Jesus, as we just heard Jesus say in the gospel reading. Given this though, the whole Bible is authoritative and should be followed to. We are not commanded to just to love God and just to show “Charity” or “*Agape*” love. These are central and important, but the rest of God’s word is

vital too. “Charity” or “*Agape*” love is central and vital to who God is, and to who we are as Christians, but there is much more to what we believe. This next picture is an example of this:

Slide 6 – (“Matthew 22:37-38 – Picture”)

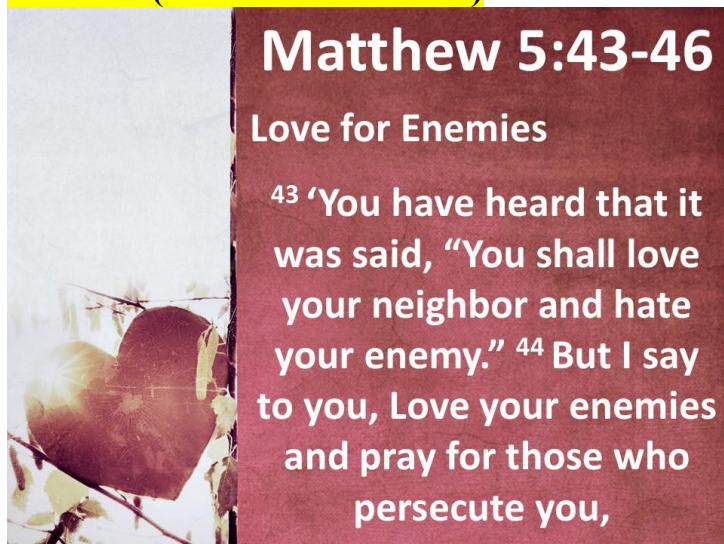


So, are the two greatest commandments to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves? Yes, of course, but in John 3:16 we are told that all who believe in Jesus will be saved. Loving good and our neighbors is important, but all of God’s biblical types of love, and all we are called to believe through scripture is important, as well. Even so, “Charity” or “*Agape*” love is not always easy. We are called to love God with everything we have, and sometimes we might think “Greatest Commandment” from Jesus to love God is easier than loving everyone. I think if some of us are honest, we do not want to love everyone. Some people

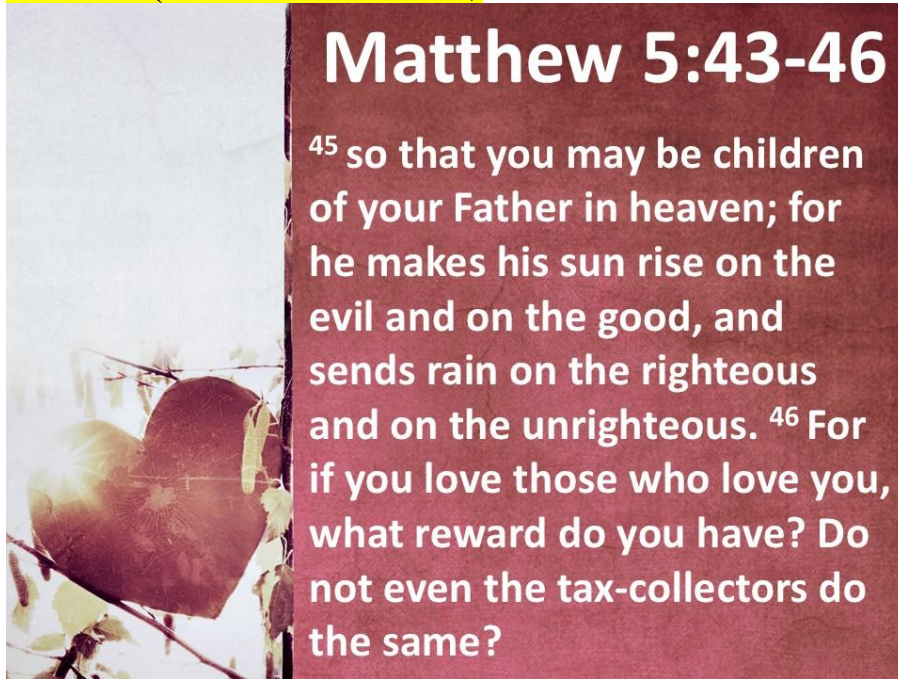
maybe do not show us love, so in return our instinct is to also not show them love. Yet we must love God, and “*Agape*” or love our neighbors and all people. The reason Jesus tells us that loving God is greatest commandment, and loving our neighbor or all people with “*Agape*” love is the second greatest commandment, is we called to love all of humanity. It is so big, and it can be so hard.

Jesus even wants us to love and care for our enemies. Jesus wants us to love and pray for the people that persecute us. Does anyone have a hard time with that? Does anyone not want to pray for people that have hurt us, or seek to harm us? If so, we can see why “*Charity*” or “*Agape*” love is the highest form of love. In some ways, maybe we could say it is the hardest, or the biggest at least. In fact, we turn in our bibles or our bible apps from Matthew 22:37-39 to Matthew 5:43-46, we are going to hear how challenging “*Charity*” or “*Agape*” love can be. This is what Matthew 5:43-46 says:

Slide 7 – (“Matthew 5:43-44”)



Slide 8 – (“Matthew 5:45-46”)



Beyond just loving God with everything we have and loving our neighbors as ourselves, Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:44, Jesus tells us to love our enemies, and even more pray for those who harm and persecute you. This can be a challenge for some, which is why “Charity” or “*Agape*” love is considered the greatest and even hardest of the four biblical loves. In loving our enemies and praying for those that persecute us, this shows, according to Jesus we are children of our Father in heaven. Our Father in heaven, “makes the sun rise on the evil and the on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” The standard of “Charity” or “*Agape*” love then, cannot be higher. In fact, Jesus says in Matthew 5:46, we love those who love us, what reward to we have in that. It is easy, often anyway, to love those that love us, but do we love those that are our enemies and those who

persecute us? This is the highest and sometimes hardest form of God’s love. Here is a good picture of what Jesus is talking to us about in Matthew 5:43-46, about “*Agape*”.

Slide 9 – (“Matthew 5:43-46” - Picture)



Think of someone who maybe harmed or hurt you. Maybe you are still angry, and it still bothers you. Now imagine you hug and forgive them? You might be cringing right now, but this is the depth of “*Agape*” love. I remember hearing a story some years ago about a man that murdered another man. The man’s mother and family who was murdered were grief stricken and beside themselves. The mother of the murdered man was a devout Christian, and after a twelve-year time of anger and grieving, she decided that she was going to forgive the man that murdered her son. In fact, she went to visit the man that murdered her son in prison


and told the man that she forgave him. She was so Christlike and so sincere, that the murderer of her son broke into tears. He simply could not believe that the mother of the man he murdered who come to him in prison and forgive him. The mother of the murdered man ended up leading the man who murdered her son to Christ. Today they love each other like family, like “*Storge*” love. That murdered man was changed by Christ, the mother and family experience healing, and this my friends is the height of “Charity” or “*Agape*” love. This is story I heard on CBN or Christian Broadcast Network about Mary Johnson and Oshea Israel if you want to look it up. Are we willing to have “Charity” or “*Agape*” love like this? Forgiving, praying for all people, and loving all people boldly is “Charity,” or “*Agape*” love.

Further, Jesus forgave some of his own disciples. Jesus served Judas Iscariot communion at the Last Supper, knowing he sold him out for 30-pieces of silver. Jesus still loved him, and I think he would have forgiven Judas Iscariot if he had not taken his own life. In addition to this, on the day of Jesus’s crucifixion that first Good Friday, the Apostle Peter denied know Jesus three times, and was not present at his crucifixion. After Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he appeared to the Apostles or disciples for 40-days, before ascending into heaven. One of the most powerful examples of “Charity,” or “*Agape*” love can be found in the gospel of John 21:15-17. If you want to turn from the gospel of Matthew 5 to the gospel of John 21:15-17, we have the reversal of sorts, of the Peter denying Jesus Christ

three times. Peter and some of the disciples, go fishing all night, but catch nothing. Just after daybreak, the resurrected Christ appears on the beach, but the disciples could not tell it was Jesus. Jesus asks them if they have caught any fish, and of course they say no. Jesus then says cast your net out of the right side of your boat. When they did this, their net was so overloaded, they could not lift it into the boat. Just then, one of the disciples realize that the man of the beach is the resurrected Christ. The Apostle Peter jumps out of the boat into the water and begins swimming to the shore, as their boat was close. The rest of the disciples bring the boat in and drag the net full of 153 fish. When they all got to shore, that saw Jesus had a fire with fish and bread cooking on it. Jesus asked Peter for some of the fish that they caught, and Peter then hauled the net of fish to the shore. Jesus then invites them all to have breakfast with him. This was the third time that Jesus had appeared to the disciples after his resurrection.

After the breakfast, Jesus then just talks to Peter. In John 21:15-17, this the conversation the Peter and Jesus had:

Slide 10 – (“John 21:15”)




John 21:15-17

Jesus and Peter

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’

Slide 11 – (“John 21:16-17”)



John 21:15-17

¹⁶ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’

The Apostle Peter, the one who briefly walked on the water, who denied Jesus Christ three times on that first Good Friday is asked three times by Jesus if he loves

him. Why? Well Peter denied him three times, and in this third resurrected appearance, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loves him, as to forgive and restore him. The day that Jesus Christ our Lord suffered and died, Peter said he did not know Jesus and said it three times. The only disciples at the crucifixion was John, as the other fled. Yet, Jesus Christ our Lord in his third appearance to the disciples' post resurrection, not only cooks them breakfast, which I think is pretty cool, but he also forgives Peter. Not only this, from the research I have done Jesus did not ask Peter three times if he loves him, but in the Ancient Greek of the original New Testament, Jesus asks Peter is he "*Agapes*" him. Further, Jesus then responded, "feed my lambs," "tend my sheep," and "feed my sheep." Jesus then in part reminds Peter to "follow him" in John 21:22. Here is good picture that shows us Jesus asking Peter three times if he love him:

Slide 12 – ("John 21:15-17 - Picture")



You might notice that Jesus is asking Peter to love and serve the church, but also to love all people. To show the church “*Agape*,” but also to show the world “*Agape*” as the gospel of Jesus Christ is for everyone.

“Charity,” or “*Agape*” love then, is truly the highest form of God’s love, and can be the hardest of the four loves. Here are some ways that the biblical love of “Charity,” or “*Agape*” apply to our lives today:

Slide 13 – (“Application to our Live” # 1)



Application to our Lives:

- Examples of “*Agape*” love in the Bible:
- “God is [*agape*]” (1 John 4:8)
- “The [*agape*] of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:19)
- “Greater [*agape*] hath no man than this” (John 15:13)

When we look at certain scriptures in the original Ancient Greek of the New Testament, we can see how different types of love are used differently. God is “*Agape*” love, and how do we will live out every day? They are many other examples of “*Agape*,” as well.

Here is some application to our lives from the “Charity” aspect of “Agape” love.

Do we challenge ourselves to do these things?

Slide 14 – (Application to our Lives: # 2)




Application to our Lives:

- Examples of “Charity” love:
 - Spending time with people you don't like
 - Showing kindness to enemies
 - Reconciling with estranged family members
 - Showing affection for people you don't get along with

Here also how all four types of biblical love apply to our lives today:

Slide 15 – (“Application To Our Lives:” # 3)



Application to our Lives:

- The Bible describes four types of love using the Greek words *Eros*, *Storge*, *Philia*, and *Agape*. These types of love refer to Biblical marriage, familial, brotherly, and divine love.

As I call the praise team forward, one of the big take aways for this sermon series is that there are different types of love from God. Four to be exact, and we should embrace these different types of biblical love, and we should also think about and see where these different types of love are present in our lives. We can also challenge ourselves to improve in how live and love the four different types of biblical love. May we all love each other deep this day and always. Know that I have great “*Agape*” for you all. Amen.