

LOVED — WEEK THREE — GOD IS DEFINED BY LOVE

1 John 4:8

December 10, 2023

1. Introduction

a. Welcome—Guests

b. Mission & Vision

i. 1000 Kids Final Week—970 with one session to go!

ii. Funding meals is an example of the need for year-end giving

c. Series—Loved: The Message of Christmas

i. LOVED: The Message of Christmas — 1 John 4:7-12

1. The best Christmas gifts are ones that show you how much you are loved. They communicate that someone knows you well, cares about you, and wants you to know it. In the familiarity of the Christmas story, we might overlook that God has given us that kind of gift in the birth of Jesus. The Bible says God showed his love for us by sending Jesus into the world so we can live through him. The message of Christmas is that **YOU ARE LOVED.**

a. We have a hard time grasping God's love for us, but it's the most important thing.

2. This advent season we're discovering six ways God's love is revealed in 1 John 4:7-12.

- ii. Week One—God is the source of love
- iii. Week Two —Love Comes From Knowing God
- iv. Today—**God is Defined by Love**
 - 1. **1 John 4:7-8.** 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.
 - 2. **1 John 4:16.** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.
 - 3. **Romans 5:5b.** God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.
 - 4. Is there definition to this love? How do we know it when we see it? How can we *rely* on it in our lives?
 - a. **Exodus 34:6b-7.** The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, *slow to anger*, abounding in love and faithfulness, *maintaining love* to thousands, and *forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin*.
 - b. **“The love which he shows to humanity ... is a revelation of his own inner being. When we look at God’s wisdom, we see something of his mind; when we think of his power, we see something of his hand and his arm; when we consider his word, we learn about his mouth; but now, contemplating his love, we are to look into his**

heart.” J.I. Packer

- i. Packer names five demonstrations of love that are so central to God’s heart that he is defined by them. These aren’t just what God does, they are who he is.
- ii. We’ll recognize these in human experience, but imperfectly, inconsistently. They come from God as the source, and they grow in us as we come to know him.
- iii. With God these demonstrations of love are perfectly consistent, they’re who he is at heart, so we can rely on him.
 1. When someone is trying to be someone they’re not, eventually they will prove unreliable. But who someone is at the heart will ultimately define them.
 2. Those who truly love you will show up. We know their love because we can rely on it.
 3. STORY. Not replying to texts but following through on action. We don’t get a reply text from God, but we can rely on his actions.

2. You can rely on God’s goodness.

- a. He deals generously & kindly with his creatures.
 - i. **Psalm 145:9.** The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.
 - ii. **Psalm 145:15-16.** The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.
- b. Common grace shows God's love for people.
 - i. **“Love, generally, is that principle which leads one moral being to desire and delight in another.” James Orr**

3. You can rely on God's goodness *to sinners*.

- a. Packer. “Love among persons is awakened by something in the beloved, but the love of God is free, spontaneous, unevoked, uncaused. God loves people because he has chosen to love them, and no reason can be given except his own sovereign good pleasure.”
 - i. Weak & Undeserving People
 - 1. Deuteronomy 7:6-8. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

b. Wicked & Ungrateful People

1. People who are not just disinterested, but actively opposed to God.
2. Luke 6:35. Jesus said, “But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”
3. **Romans 5:7-8.** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
4. More on the sacrifice of Jesus in a couple weeks.

4. You can rely on God’s personal investment in your welfare.

- a. Packer. God was happy before he created human beings, and he could have continued happy had he destroyed them after they sinned. But through setting his love on human beings God has voluntarily bound up his own final happiness with theirs. Thus God saves, not only for his glory, but also for his gladness.
- b. Packer. Such an identification is involved in all love: it is indeed the test of whether or not love is genuine. If a mother continues cheerful and carefree while her child is in trouble, or if a husband remains unmoved while his wife is in distress, we wonder how much love there can be in their relationship because we know that those who truly love are only happy when those whom they love are truly happy

also.

- i. **Luke 15:10.** There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Lost sheep & lost coin)
- c. STORY. Ruth identified with Naomi's happiness
- d. STORY. Dina identified with Nia's happiness.
- e. STORY. We are happy before marriage & before kids. But once we marry or have kids our happiness is bound up in theirs. They can diminish our happiness, but they can also multiply it.

5. **You can rely on God's sacrificial generosity.**

- a. The measure of love is how much it gives and at what cost. God gave the gift of his only son at the cost of his suffering and death.
 - i. The coming of Jesus is a gift of full identification with our sin and brokenness.
 - ii. The coming of Jesus is a gift that allows us to identify with his perfection and glory.
 - iii. The coming of Jesus is a gift that guarantees God's continuing generosity in our lives.
 - 1. **Romans 8:31b-32.** If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?
- b. **"It is as if God said, 'You shall have as true and interest in all my attributes for your good, as they are mine for my own glory ... my**

grace shall be yours to pardon you, my power to protect you, my wisdom to direct you, my goodness to comfort you, my mercy to supply you, and my glory to crown you.” Thomas Brooks

c. STORY.

6. You can rely on God’s commitment to you.

a. Packer. A covenant relationship is one in which two parties are permanently pledged to each other in mutual service and dependence (e.g. marriage).

i. Genesis 17:7. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

ii. Galatians 3:29. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

b. Tillotson. “This is true love to anyone, to do the best for them we can.”

i. The best God can do is omnipotence. All his power leveraged for your good for eternity.

1. That’s his commitment to you.
2. That’s his sacrificial generosity toward you.
3. That’s his personal investment in you.
4. That’s his merciful goodness to you, a sinner.
5. That’s his heart of goodness to his creation.

- ii. That's the message of Christmas. You are loved by a God who IS love.

7. Invitation

- a. God has done his best for you. Will you respond in kind?
- b. He is committed to you. Will you be committed to him?
- c. He has sent you a text, will you reply?