

The Sacrifice of An Only Child

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[0 : 00] We are in 1st John. We've been going through this book for some time. And the passage we are on today fits perfectly with the theme of Good Friday.

So please turn with me to 1st John chapter 4, verses 7 to 21. 1st John chapter 4, verses 7 to 21. Let me read it out loud for us.

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.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

[1 : 54] By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him and He in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so, also are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.

[3 : 07] For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, whoever loves God must also love his brother.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Imagine with me that you are at your own child's funeral, and someone exclaims, Oh, what a good day it is.

A good day. A sunny day, maybe. A beautiful day, maybe. But a good day. I'm grieving the loss of my precious child, and you call this a good day.

The Friday 2,000 years ago, when God's only Son was crucified, it's what we call Good Friday. The word good used to mean holy, or set apart, special.

So how can we call this day special? How can we call this day Good Friday? And this passage we just read tells us that it's Good Friday, because it reveals to us God's love for us in Jesus Christ.

[4 : 33] That God the Father loved us to the point that He sacrificed His only Son to save us. And that's the main point of this passage, that we are to display in our love for our Christian brothers and sisters, the love that our Heavenly Father showed us in sacrificing His only Son for us.

And so first, we're going to talk about God's love for us in verses 7 to 10, and then we'll talk about our love for one another in verses 11 to 21.

Verse 7 begins, Beloved, in all of John's letters, he uses many affectionate, you know, familial terms.

We've seen him call his readers little children many times in this book so far already. And he says, he addresses them as beloved many times in this book as well.

And in saying that, addressing us in that way, addressing God's people in that way, he's reminding us that we are beloved children of God. You may have grown up with unloving, perhaps even abusive parents.

[5 : 43] You may have grown up without parents at all. But if you are part of the family of God, then you are not abandoned, you are not orphaned, you are not unwanted, you are not defective, you are beloved.

And so he addresses us, beloved people. And as those who are loved by God, John commands, let us love one another.

He's speaking of the love within the family of God. We are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. But why should the fact that we are loved by God make us love one another? John explains in verse 7, For love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

True love for the people of God only has one origin. I don't have the credentials to be a coffee snob or anything or to talk about such things that I'm about to talk about.

Some of you do. Please don't laugh at me. But I enjoy a good cup of decaf coffee. You know that someone really likes coffee when they're drinking even when it doesn't have caffeine, right?

[6 : 58] Now, there has been a sudden increase in specialty coffee shops and many of them sell what they call single origin coffee. Which in its strictest sense means that the coffee was literally grown on a single farm.

It's not grown on many farms. It's not grown in many countries. So if you have money enough and a palate sensitive enough to enjoy such single origin coffee, neither of which I have, you know exactly where that coffee came from.

Because it's a single origin coffee. And genuine love, John is saying, is the same way. Genuine love for God's people is the same way because love for God's people is a single origin virtue.

wherever there is genuine love for God and His people, there will be the undeniable presence of God. For love is from God.

It's the only source it comes from. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. That means you're not going to find it anywhere else.

[8 : 09] people search for love in all the wrong places. You're not going to find true love in an internet chat room. You're not going to find true love in a one night stand.

You're not going to find true love by succeeding and gaining the esteem of your peers and coworkers. If you want to experience the raw, unfiltered, authentic love of God and not the cheap imitations of it, the only place to find it is among the people of God who love one another and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Love for our fellow brothers and sisters is one of the distinguishing marks of the Christians that I talked about last week. And whenever that love is there, we know that we have truly been born of God.

John's here using the metaphor of birth to describe the Christian's conversion. He spoke of this earlier in chapter 3, verse 9. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

We were all once children of Adam, the original sinner, the first sinner. And when we renounced our sinful heritage and pledged allegiance to Jesus through our faith in him, we are born again by God's seed, which is a reference to the Holy Spirit's work in implanting the word of Christ, the gospel of Jesus Christ into our hearts.

[9 : 44] And when that happens, when we become a Christian, God becomes the ultimate and primary object of our affection and devotion. When we become a Christian, our ultimate and primary family becomes the church of God.

And when we become a Christian, our ultimate and primary standard, the code by which we live, becomes the word of God. And for this reason, when we are born of God, born into his family, we start to be characterized by the love of God.

This is why it says in verse 8, anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. Please don't misunderstand this famous phrase, God is love, as a validation of all the vague slogans that people toss around nowadays.

Love is all you need. Love is love. One love. Because love is frequently misconstrued and misapplied. Note that it does not say love is God.

No, it says God is love. Many people in our culture think that love is God. And of course, it is they who ultimately define what love is in their own subjective sense of what it is.

[10 : 58] So they justify illicit relationships and marriages by saying that they've found true love. And that nothing must stand in the way of that love. They say that if you really love someone, you

should let that person be and do whatever he or she wishes to be and do.

But that's not true love. The truth is that it's people we care nothing about that we leave alone to live however they wish. It's the illegitimate children who are left alone to roam the streets and do whatever they want.

The legitimate children are disciplined, educated, corrected, guided. It's phony friends that are content to watch us ruin our lives with bad decisions and vices.

True friends confront us. They chide us. Even get angry with us when we make bad decisions that jeopardize our well-being. We are in grave danger of distorting love as this passage is speaking of when we contradict the teaching of Scripture by saying things like a God of love would not demand such things.

Well, that biblical command is unloving. Who says who says so? According to whose definition of love is that unloving when the Bible teaches your definition of love?

[12:24] Society's definition of love? No, the only person who can rightly define love is God because God is love. And too many people in our world are buying the inferior counterfeit and are living without the eternal satisfaction that God's love offers as a result.

Our own flawed, sinful, and human understanding of what love is must never become the mold by which we shape God's love into our own liking. Rather, God's perfect love must become the mold by which we shape our own loves.

In verses 9-10, John tells us exactly how God revealed His love to us. It says, In this the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

In this is love not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Notice the repetition of the phrase in this in verse 9 and verse 10.

That's like a giant flashing neon arrow telling you to look here. Do you want to know what love is? Do you want to experience the love of God?

[13:45] Then you don't need to look elsewhere because it's right here. He's saying in this the love of God is revealed. It says in verse 9 first that God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

God sent His Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Jesus said in John 10-10 I came that you may have life and have it abundantly. Fullness of life is found in Jesus alone.

And what does that life look like? Jesus said in John chapter 17 verse 3 and this is eternal life that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

It's in knowing Jesus and believing Jesus that we receive the spiritual vitality the life that flows into eternity. God did not leave us on our own but He sent His only Son on a perilous journey into the world.

The word world occurs more often in 1 John than in any other book of the Bible and in most of those occurrences it denotes a hostile environment.

[14:54] He said earlier in chapter 2 verse 16 to 17 all that is in the world the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world and the world is passing away along with its desires.

He said in 1 John chapter 3 verse 13 do not be surprised that the world hates you. He will say later in chapter 5 verse 19 the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Now does that sound like the school that you would send your kids to. Join us this fall at world school.

Here your kid will surely be hated and bullied and he will be ruined with all kinds of sensual pleasures and pride so that he will surely graduate firmly under the power of the evil one.

And that diploma will not matter because this school is passing away. Okay. God the father sent his only son into this world so that we might live through him.

[16:14] He sent him into this hostile territory where he will be persecuted, where he will be executed so that we might live through him.

The description that Jesus is God's only son as extra pathos to this reality, the word that is translated here is only occurs nine times in the New Testament and every time it serves to highlight the uniqueness and preciousness of the person that is being described.

For one example, in Luke chapter 7 verse 12, the word only is used to describe a man who had died and was being carried out for a funeral procession.

And he is called the only son of his mother who was a widow. This point in description makes the death particularly tragic because not only is it sad that a mother has to bury her own child, it should have been the other way around.

But this man was also the only heir of this mother. And since this woman had already lost her husband, she was a widow, this man was her only hope of future provision and progeny.

[17 : 35] He was her only son. To capture that emotional power of that word, the New International Version, which is another translation, renders it one and only son.

God sent his one and only son into the world so that we might live through him. God the father didn't have spare sons lying around.

He only had one and this son is his eternal son, the second person of the Trinity, the one whom he had eternal fellowship with.

And how exactly did God give us eternal life through his son? It says in verse 10, that in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

That Jesus is the propitiation for our sins means that Jesus was the atoning sacrifice for our sins. By dying on the cross in the place of sinners, Jesus pays on the one hand the penalty of our sins and then he pacifies the wrath of God.

[18 : 55] Now some people might criticize the idea of propitiation as primitive or crude. They despise a God of wrath and they say that this is no different from the paganism of the Greco-Roman world or the animism and shamanism of various Asian and African civilizations or the superstitious use of talisman and charms in western civilization.

But that's not true. All these other religions and superstitions have something in common and it's that humans are afraid of the wrath of various so called deities and spirits and therefore they offer sacrifices to them in order to pacify them and earn their favor.

In the Old Testament for example in Leviticus chapter 20 God explicitly forbids God's people his people from sacrificing their children to pagan god Molech who offers them favor and well-being supposedly but compare that to Christianity where the picture is fundamentally different.

It's not humans out of their fear seeking to pacify on their own initiative these deities it's God who loves first not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins God is the one who has the initiative and God's the one who offers the solution to propitiate his own wrath God because God loves us he finds a way to satisfy the demands of his justice for sinners like us so that he could save us he pays the dearest costly price himself the second person of the triune God his one and only son bears our sin and dies the death that we deserved that's why it's fundamentally different Romans chapter 3 verses 21 to 26 tell us that the cross of Jesus showed God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins this is what Paul means by that we cry foul don't we when judges unjustly let perpetrators of heinous crimes go free or to let them off the hook too easily without punishing them with appropriate severity people cry foul when they see that they say that is unjust that's a corrupt judge and likewise it would have been unjust and corrupt for God to show mercy to sinners like us we deserved eternal punishment for our sins against

God because we sinned against an infinite infinitely worthy God God God's justice God's holiness have to be satisfied somehow and that somehow is the cross of Jesus Christ it is what vindicates or proves the righteousness of God in having passed over our former sins his forbearance over our sins Jesus is the substitutionary sacrifice that God himself provided my wife has suffered multiple miscarriages in our marriage and as heart wrenching and tragic as that is it's not as difficult as losing a child that we have already had a chance to build a relationship with a child that we have had a chance to hold to kiss to tuck under the bed

[22 : 58] I can't imagine the pain of losing one of my daughters even though I have two of them and even though I've only had six years to spend with the older one but imagine the loss the pain of God our father who had only one son and a son who had loved him perfectly the son that he loved with his perfect unrelenting love for eternity and yet even sinful human parents will gladly lay down their own lives to save their children yet God the father who loved his son so loved us loved us the disobedient rebellious children the illegitimate bastard children offspring of sin he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins that's how we know what love is that's the father's love for us and then in verse 11

John pivots from God's love for us to once again our love for one another he addresses us again as beloved if God so loved us we also ought to love one another God's love for us motivates us to love

one another this was John's argument in chapter 3 that if the love of the father truly resides in us then we will inevitably love our brothers and sisters in the family of God since the family of God the people of God are the objects of God special affection and because God paid the dearest price of his own son in order to redeem when we take our annual family trip to Seattle to visit my parents my parents friends always shower us with love they take us out to eat they get gifts for our children they visit us and spend time with us and why do they do that we hardly see them anymore and rarely talk and it's not because we are so great that they love us so much it's because they love my parents it's because they love my parents who have loved them and because they know that my parents love us so to them loving us is a tangible expression of their love for my parents similarly our love for our Christian brothers and sisters serve as the proof that we indeed belong to God and have God's love in us John elaborates on this truth in verse 12 no one has ever seen God if we love one another God abides in us and his love is perfected in us the invisibility of God is a major theme in the gospel of John he writes in John 1 18 no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the father's side he has made him known so no one has seen God the only person who can reveal God to us definitively is his son the second person of the trinity Jesus Christ who is now at the father's side after having ascended to the heavens now that's wonderful right for people who lived during Jesus time like

John but what about all the subsequent generations who no longer have Jesus with them in the flesh John is actually writing this letter to such people he says in verse 14 we have seen and testified that the father has sent his son to be the savior of the world John has seen the he was a beneficiary of Jesus' personal ministry to him during his life but his readers are not and John's writing so that he might transmit transfer what he has received from Jesus to future generations but how are they how are we who have never seen Jesus who have never seen this invisible God to be assured that we indeed belong to God and that God's love abides in us verse 12 is John's answer no one has ever seen God if we love one another God abides in us and his love is perfected in us here is how the invisible

God is evidenced among us in our love for one another when the Son of God became incarnate took a human flesh and walked the earth he revealed God the Father's love love to us and in a similar way now we as the church as the body of Christ indwelt by the Spirit of God we reveal God in the way we love one another it is in our love for one another that God's presence is made manifest and his love is perfected meaning that God's love has its full effect in creating that same kind of love in us John expands on this truth later in verses 20 and 21 if anyone says if anyone says I love God and hates his brother he is a liar for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen and this commandment we have from him whoever loves God must also love his brother no one has seen God because God is spirit he is invisible and therefore the claim to love God is difficult to verify isn't it but our love for one another whom we do see that can be verified this is why the local church the community of God's people is so important a Christian that isolates him or herself cannot rightly claim to love God because his love for God is not demonstrated in his love for his Christian brothers and sisters anyone can claim to love God in the abstract in theory but we prove that love concretely in practice in the way we love each other so then if your pursuit of God does not increase your love for the church then you are probably not pursuing God rightly because the heart of God brims over with love for his people there is a second related way by which we know that God dwells in us it says in verse 13 by this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit but that begs the question how do we know that we have received the Holy Spirit?

[30 : 56] John doesn't go into that much detail here about that and that's because he has already answered that question at length at the beginning of this chapter in chapter 4 verses 1 to 6 he told us that the test by which we know that we have received the true spirit of God is that those who have the spirit of God verse 2 verse 3 confess Jesus they believe in his name they pledge allegiance to him they believe that he is the word made flesh the son of God and son of man the savior of the world and so John summarizes what he said earlier here in verses 14 and 15 and we have seen and testified that the father has sent his son to be the savior of the world whoever confesses that Jesus is the son of God God abides in him and he in God this is how we know that we have received the spirit of God it's not some subjective tingly feeling or a cathartic emotional experience but faith in Jesus Christ as the son of God and savior of the world and this faith in Christ inescapably produces love for one another so John says in verse 16 so we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us and God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God

and God abides in him the phrase the love that God has for us is literally the love that God has in us in the original language we are assured that God's love is in us when we believe in Jesus Christ on the one hand and we love one another these are the twin proofs of genuine conversion that John reiterates again and again throughout this letter because our brotherhood with fellow Christians flows it's the natural outflow of being born again into the family of God because receiving God's love through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is what naturally flows out into our sacrificial love for one another it's impossible to have one of these distinguishing marks without the other they always come together this is why

John repeatedly uses this expression that God's love is perfected in us look at verse 12 God's love is perfected in us he uses that expression four times in this letter and three of those times are in this passage that we just read he says again in verses 17 to 19 by this is love perfected with us so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment because as he is so also are we in this world there is no fear in love but perfect love casts out fear for fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not been perfected in love we love because he first loved us the word perfected has a sense of completing its course God's love is not a static thing it's a dynamic thing it has movement and God's love completes its course in our faith in Jesus and in our love for one another all of our faith all of our love is but an outworking the outflow the overflow of God's prior love for us because it says we love because he first loved us

I pray that all of you will walk away with this sense of God's overwhelming love for you this Good Friday this tells us that our loyalty our obedience our faithfulness the zealosity the zealousness of our love for him that these were not the prior conditions for God's love for us whether God loved us first God loved us while we were still his enemies God loved us when we were unloving and unlovable and this is why God's love his perfect love casts out fear Christ has already propitiated God's wrath God has already forgiven us of our sins so that we no longer need to live in fear of divine retribution we no longer need to live in fear of

God's judgment some of you have not yet put your faith in Jesus Christ and this assurance unfortunately is not yet yours but it can be yours if you stop impeding the progress of God's love in your life by putting your faith in Jesus Christ and by obeying his command to love one another and some of you have already put your faith in Jesus Christ but you still live unfortunately with guilt fear lack of assurance of salvation am I really a Christian John John is not writing this to make you insecure about your salvation John is writing this to assure you of your salvation because he is writing to believers who are dealing with those who denied

Christ and separated themselves from the church of God and they were challenging their faith these people who seceded from the church and denied Christ they were saying no we are the true community of God we are the ones who have the truth we are the ones who truly have the word of God and John's reassuring these people these believers who are insecure because of what has happened in the early church that no if you believe in Jesus Christ and that he is your only salvation that salvation is found in his name alone then you can be assured of the fact that you belong to him that you abide in him you might not be able to answer all of their objections you might not be able to have all of the no have exhaustive knowledge of the scriptures you might not be you might not have done many saintly deeds in your life but do you love

[38 : 12] God's people do you love the brothers and sisters in Christ brothers and sisters I was so encouraged on Sunday because I shared with you guys about the need some of the financial need that was growing in our church because of unemployment related to COVID-19 and we challenged you guys to give financially toward the COVID-19 relief fund we rarely I think maybe less than once a year ask people directly from the pulpit to give financially but we did and you guys responded our church as we responded without pouring of love and generosity in one day we raised nearly ten thousand dollars many of you gave out of your poverty not out of your excess out of your poverty because you love each other and if you love each other you can be assured if you have faith in Jesus and you have love for one another you can be assured that God's love abides in you you belong to him you are born of him please reflect on that truth for now for a few moments and I'm going to pray for us before we sing heavenly father

I pray for those of us who are joining this Good Friday worship service who do not yet have saving faith in Jesus Christ God implant your seed seed of the gospel into their hearts by your Holy Spirit God so that they are born again spiritually into the family of God that we might call them our brother and sister that we might love them as we love each other now and God I pray for my dear brothers

and sisters who are struggling with assurance of salvation struggling with assurance of the father's love for them who are living with insecurity who are living trying to earn their heavenly father's favor when it is their heavenly father who loved them first

God help them to fix their eyes on Jesus and find their identity to count their worth and value not according to what the people of this world say but according to the price that you paid in giving your only son to save them that they would find their value in that and that they would feel so loved by you and that that overwhelming overflowing love would complete this course and be perfected in their lives by their love for one another and their faith unwavering faith in Jesus Christ our Savior do that in our midst oh father to the glory of your name in

Jesus name we pray amen amen Thank you.

Since there are many, His mercy is more. His mercy is more.

[44 : 13] Stronger than darkness in you every morning. Since there are many, His mercy is more. His mercy is more.

Thank you.