

**“Love One Another”**

I have come to believe that the simplest way to tell if someone has their GPS (God Positioning System) turned on, correctly programmed, and on their way to the proper destination is whether they love others, especially their brothers and sisters in the church. Our scripture passage today tells us that. These verses set the parameters that should guide our attitudes and our actions. The word “love” is used 13 different times in just six verses and the command to “love one another” is stated 3 separate times. Let’s listen:

“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. 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. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

A zoo visitor once replied at an unusual cage arrangement. "That’s marvelous, having a lion and monkey in the same cage," "How do they get along?" "Okay, usually," answered the zookeeper. "Occasionally they have a disagreement, and we have to get a new monkey." Now, why do they need to get a new monkey? Because things got along just fine for awhile until the lion started acting like a lion. And as long as the lions act like lions the zookeepers will always need new monkeys. Now, hold that thought!

James 2:8 tells us "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right."

The Apostle John in 1 John 3:11 wrote: "This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another."

Paul, in Romans 13:8 declared: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law."

Peter, in 1 Peter 1:22 told us: "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."

And, of course Jesus said: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:9-12)

Does anybody sense a pattern here? The pattern is a commandment of the kingdom, the royal law, the proclamation of the King of Kings & Lord of lords is: Love one another. God lays a heavy emphasis on "loving one another." ... Why say it so often throughout the New Testament? Why not just say it once...and then move on? It is because you and I don't come by this naturally? We don't know how to love as we should. Let me reread 1 John 4:7-12.

“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. 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. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

I want to share what I consider to be some amazing facts about God’s love and hopefully, if they catch your amazement as well, you will program this destination, LOVE, into your GPS.

**Amazing Fact #1: GOD CREATED YOU FOR THE PURPOSE OF LOVING YOU.** One of the most important things you need to comprehend is that you are not here by blind chance and evolutionary processes. You are not an accident of nature. You are created by Almighty God. King David recognized this fact in Ps. 139:13-16 – “For you created my inmost being; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

When God went to the drawing board and designed you He did it with the express intent of loving you and having a relationship with you. And the basic function of your life is to recognize that you are the object of God’s love. Have you ever wondered about your

purpose in life? Some people think their purpose in life is to make money; achieve success; find happiness. I'm going to tell you what your purpose in life is (just so you don't waste anymore time looking for your purpose)--Your purpose in life is TO BE LOVED BY GOD. If you're living for any other reason than to enjoy a love relationship with God, you are missing out on your real purpose in life!

**Amazing Fact #2: GOD TAKES THE INITIATIVE IN LOVING YOU.** What I'm saying is this: God did not wait for you to come to Him. God has initiated the relationship process. The fact of the matter is that none of us, in and of ourselves, would ever seek God on our own initiative. Romans 3:10-12 says it like this, "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Left to ourselves, we would do what that country song from several years ago described, "We'd be looking for love in all the wrong places". C.S. Lewis said that when people talk about their search for God, it's like the mouse speaking of his search for the cat. Now we all have the desire to be loved. God created us with the desire to be loved. However, human love never adequately fills that desire. Because we know that we're not fully satisfied, we look to fill the empty place inside us with all sorts of things, pleasure, success, popularity, or possessions. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, calls this search for something to fill that empty space with anything but God a "grasping after the wind." No matter what we use to fill the void in our life, if it's not a love relationship with God, they will never do the job. All the while we're looking for love in the wrong places, God is actively pursuing a relationship with us.

**Amazing Fact #3: GOD’S LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL.** God’s love is not tied to the worth of the person being loved. He loves you no matter what. In the 1st century common Greek utilized four different words that simply got translated into English as the generic word love

- a. Philos – friendship love
- b. Eros – romantic love or passion
- c. Storge – family love
- d. Agape – love for its own sake

You may not know what the difference is between the first three words and agape? The first three are based on what the other party does for you; based on what you receive; what is beneficial to you. Agape – sacrificial and committed; exists for the sole benefit of the one being loved. That’s the kind of love God has for each of us! John Ortberg, in his book entitled, “Love Beyond Reason”, states it this way: “God doesn’t just love you because he has to, he loves you because he wants to. God delights in you. Of course, that doesn’t mean God delights in everything you do. Your own mother doesn’t do that, if she’s at all healthy. But the fact that you exist—you, your own self—is very good in God’s eyes. God likes to love you”. But God hates sin. Let me try and explain that in way that you can understand.

I want you to imagine that you’re going for a very important job interview and you’re dressed in some of your best clothes. You’ve spent a good deal of time making sure you’re perfectly presentable for this interview. As you walk toward the building where the interview is being held, you meet a relative who has a three-year-old child who is very

special to you. This child has been eating peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and, as three-year-olds are prone to do, the peanut butter and jelly is smeared all over him. Not only that, but every piece of dirt, grass, and leaf that he's come into contact with is stuck to his hands, face, and clothes. As you get close to them, he puts his arms into the air because he wants you to pick him up and give him a big hug. What would you do? Now you understand a little bit about how God feels in the presence of sin.

Because of His justice, God requires that the penalty for sin must be paid. Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We owed a debt we could not pay but because He loves us, God paid a debt that He did not owe. John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Rom. 5:8 – “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Christ’s death on the cross was the ultimate expression of His love for each of us! We were in need of a Savior and God loved us enough to provide that Savior through the death of His Son on a cruel Roman cross. Philip Yancey, *What’s So Amazing About Grace?*, puts forth two stunning concepts: a. There is nothing we can do to make God love us more and, b. There is nothing we can do to make God love us less.

**Amazing Fact #4: GOD’S LOVE NEVER GIVES UP.** “I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever...” We’ve already discussed the New Testament’s special word for God’s love. The Old Testament also has a special word for God’s love. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew and the special word for

God's love in that language is chesed. It has the sense of love, kindness and mercy all wrapped together. It's also a word that designates stubbornness and loyalty in its affection. God's love stays faithful to us long after we've forfeited any claim to His love.

God's "stubborn love" is described by the apostle Paul in Romans 8:35-38 – "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**5th Amazing Fact: GOD WANTS us TO LOVE HIM IN RETURN.** Just as "God gives of Himself to love us", He also wants us to return that love to Him. The God who created all things and who needs nothing actually rejoices when we love Him in return. God's greatest delight is when we respond to the love He has shown us and love Him in return.

There are several important things we need to remember: 1. We don't deserve His love. 2. He doesn't need our love. 3. But He wants our love. 4. God simply gives us the choice to love Him or not to love Him. 5. It's totally for our benefit and not for His to do so. Max Lucado wrote in his book, *In a Gentle Thunder*: "If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If God had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. When you want to talk, He'll listen. He

could live anywhere in the universe, and He chose your heart. And that Christmas gift He sent you in Bethlehem; not to mention that Friday at Calvary? Face it, friend. He's crazy about you!" My prayer for us all this morning comes from Ephesians 3:17-19 – "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Program that into your GPS...Love God, Love One Another.