Perfect Love

Rev. Scott Shetter ~ April 19, 2020 ~ The Church of the Covenant

Opening remarks.

➢ It is a beautiful day to stand in the presence of our Lord.
  ▪ Jesus has paid the price for our sin.
  ▪ He has conquered death and the grave.
  ▪ He has given us new life.
➢ If God is for us, then who can be against us? Whom shall we fear?
➢ We live in witness to and as witnesses of God’s great love.
  ▪ God’s great and perfect love.

Love in the Bible.

➢ We all know the great love chapter in the Bible.
  ▪ 1 Corinthians 13.
  ▪ In this chapter, Paul tells us all about what love is.
  ▪ He tells us how love moves and operates.
  ▪ It is a discussion of the moral operations of love.
  ▪ It is the most famous passage about love.
➢ Today’s passage is also a great statement about love.
  ▪ It is a powerful statement on love that does not get the same kind of attention as “The Love Chapter.”
  ▪ In fact, today’s passage does not even appear in the common lectionary.
  ▪ Yet, this passage tells us more about what love is than the other passage which tells us what love does.
    • What John has written is more theological.

Breaking it down.

➢ John starts this reading with a statement that we should love one another because love comes from God.
  ▪ Why, anyone who does is born of God, is one of God’s children.
  ▪ Sounds pretty simple, right?
    • Well let me ask a question.
      ♦ Now that you have been stuck at home for weeks with your loved ones and the walls are starting to close in, are you finding it more difficult to love those with whom you live?
      ♦ I will bet that the answer is probably yes.
      ♦ If we can struggle in our own homes, how much harder is it to love others?
        ➢ This must mean we do not come by this naturally – even being born again of God.
  ➢ John understands this difficulty.
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- He was writing to this congregation because there were those who believed they were Christians and were teaching new doctrines that did not show the love of Christ.
- That is why John takes us back to what God has done through us in Christ Jesus.
  - Imagine this: God loves us so much He sent the world’s greatest missionary and evangelist to live among us.
  - We love because God loves us.
    - While we were still dead in our sins, Christ became the atoning sacrifice.

John continues his discussion of God and His love by reminding us that no one has seen God except through the Son.
- Jesus lived His life and died and was resurrected to show God’s love for us.
  - Continuing the logical path that he is on, John says that if we live in Christ and He lives in us, then His love should be shown through us.
  - If His love is found in us, then His love is being made complete; it is being perfected in us.

Finally, John makes his big theological statement.
- God is love.
  - He does not say that God feels love.
  - He does not say that God is loving.
  - He says that God’s character is love.
    - God does what He does centered in love for His creation.
    - God’s love is perfect because He is perfect.
    - It is evidenced as perfect because we live in Him and we love like Him.

Perfect love.
- There is no fear in love.
- Love and fear are opposites and cannot coexist.
- When love is perfected in us because we live out of the love of God and love like God, we have nothing to fear because love casts fear out of the way.
- Fear comes with judgment and punishment, but God’s love has taken the punishment for us and removes the sting of judgment from us.
- No matter what may come our way, if we live in the love of God through Christ Jesus, we have nothing to fear.
  - I have heard fear in so many voices over the last month or more because we have been introduced to a new enemy called COVID-19.
  - It has run rampant throughout the world and it seems like there may never be an end to it; that we may never be able to get back to our lives again.
    - I have recently been asked if I thought this would really come to an end and we would be able to leave our homes and do many of the things we used to do.
      - I believe the answer to that question is yes, but I also believe that we will have to ask ourselves if God is not calling us to live in a way that is different from what we are used to living.
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- Maybe, we have lost sight of living out His love for the world and need to be reminded of how much He loves us and how He calls us to love.
- We have seen some incredible acts of love and heroism during this time, but I must ask why it takes a time of crisis for us to live in that way.

- John’s closing remarks may be the most difficult for us to swallow.
  - Let me read them to you again.
    - We love because he first loved us.
    - If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.
    - And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.
  - Jesus gave us the Great Commission, yes.
    - We are to Go and make disciples.
  - He also gave us the Great Commandment.
    - Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
      - Oh, how we love that commandment.
      - But we often leave out the second half.
    - And love your neighbor as yourself.

Conclusion

- To live a life in God’s perfect love is to show God’s love.
  - Yes, we absolutely should show love to God our Father because of the love He has shown us through Jesus, His Son.
  - But to live in that perfect love, we must show that love to the rest of the world.
  - We are to live out His love so that others might come to know Him as loving.
  - Then His love is made perfect and complete in us.
  - Then fear is cast aside because we live in total confidence with the Father and the Son and in the peace of the Holy Spirit.

Closing Prayer.

- Father, fear comes easily, love not so much so. Forgive us for our fear. Help us to overcome our fear to love and help us to love one another like You have loved us. Let our love, both during a crisis and in times of peace, be seen by the world so that they may know that they are loved by You and may accept the work of Your Son, Jesus, as their own. In His name we pray, Amen.