

“WHAT IS LOVE?”

Pastor Mike Corwin

TEXT: 1 JOHN 4:7-16

GOD’S WORD: ROMANS 5:1-11

I – DEFINITION:

I’m doing something a little different this morning. Instead of preaching the whole sermon and then giving you a question to think about I am giving you the question at the very beginning and I want to answer it before the end of the message. The question simply is, “WHAT IS LOVE?” We use the word all the time, we tell people we love them, but what does the word mean? I want to know what your definition of love is.

OPEN DISCUSSION WITH CONGREGATION

All of those are good, all of them make sense, but which one is the real definition? You’re not the only ones who have different definitions. I looked the word love up in the Webster’s Dictionary and it gives 19 different definitions. So which one is right? What is love?

II – TEXT:

I believe that there is a much better definition of love. This one wasn’t written by Webster, it was written by the Apostle John. Listen to his definition of love.

1 John 4:7-16 (NLT)

⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. ¹⁰ This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. ¹²

No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. ¹³ And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. ¹⁴ Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. ¹⁶ We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

John says simply that “God is love.” The definition of love is God. In the dictionary it could do away with all the definitions and just say, “See God.” John tells us in this passage that the very essence of God is love. Love isn’t just one of God’s activities; it isn’t just something he does from time to time. He tells us that the very nature of God is love.

He says that if you know love, then you know God and if you don’t know love you don’t know God. The entire being of God is about love and that was the force behind the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. He loved us so much that he gave up his most beloved possession...he gave up his Son to die for us, to wash away the stain of our sins, because only then could he love us the way he wanted to love us and only then could we love him back. You see, God gave us love and you can only love God because he first loved you. Love exists only as a response to God.

This love is so powerful that it is the heart of the Gospel. In verse 7 he tells us that a commitment to mutual love is the requirement of the Gospel. First to love God and then to love one another. Remember the two important commandments we’ve been talking about this year? To love God and then to love one another. He tells us here that loving one another is a sign that we have that love of God in us. That God lives in us and that his love is shown to others through us.

Matter of fact John tells us how deep this love is. He repeatedly calls to our attention that love is in us because God is in us. His spirit abides with us to prove not only that God lives in us but also that we live in God. He tells us that in verse 13, verse 15, and verse 16.

This love isn’t just some passing fancy, not just puppy love, it is a deep and abiding love where we are attuned to God’s love and we live God’s love and we are present in God’s love because he is present in us.

GOD IS LOVE!

III – GOD IS LOVE:

Why doesn't everybody get this? Why doesn't everyone realize that God is love and loving God and loving each other should be our highest priorities? The God we worship is the God of love and he has gone to great lengths to share that love with us.

Who but the God of love would send his one and only Son to die for us? Only a God of love would watch as that Son cried to him in a garden because of the upcoming suffering he faced and not take the pain away. Only a God of love would stand by and allow that Son to be arrested, shackled, and led away as he was slapped and hit on his way to trial. Only a God of love would stand by while his Son was spit upon and humiliated and had thorns pushed into his head as he was mocked. Only a God of love would stand by while that Son was beaten so savagely that his skin was torn from his body and the blood flowed freely down his raw body onto the ground. Only a God of love would stand by and allow that Son to be paraded up a hill and nailed to a wooden cross to die like a common criminal when he deserved none of it, when he was guilty of nothing. And only a God of love would turn his face away from that Son as he took the sins of the world upon his own soul, cried out "My Father, My Father, why have you forsaken me," and then died so that you and I could escape the punishment we deserve for our sins. And he did it all not because he loved Jesus...he did it because he loved each and every one of us. Jesus wasn't saving himself...he was saving us! How can you not know a God who would do such a thing to his own Son on your behalf loves you and how could you not love him back?

And if you love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind by accepting the fact that Jesus is his Son, then loving one another on his behalf is easy. You can't help but want to share the grace and mercy that flows over you with others. You can't help but be a living definition of love.

IV – LOVE IS DEEP:

We have lost the meaning of love in our society. Love is a word we use but don't really understand or mean. We apply it to food or material things. We apply it to a lifestyle. We use it to influence our boyfriend or girlfriend and then break up later. We utter it to our wives and children, but then somehow fall out of love and leave them. We do it all because we don't understand that love isn't merely a word, it's an emotion and a gift that comes directly from God. Love is deeper than mere words. Love is the abiding presence of God and his Holy Spirit in us. When you hold a baby and feel the warmth in your

heart...that's the love of God abiding in you. When you pet a puppy and feel content...that's the love of God abiding in you. When you snuggle with your spouse or significant other and know you want to spend the rest of your life with them...that's the love of God abiding in you. When you get joy out of playing catch with your child or helping them with their homework...that's the love of God abiding in you. When you can be happy because a cat purrs on your lap...that's the love of God abiding in you.

Love is the abiding presence of God in every fiber of your being. And when you let God abide in you, you abide in God and the love that flows from this relationship will change the world.

When you get upset by the abuse of innocent people and do something about it, that's the love of God working through you. When you are outraged by the numbers of people who are hungry and you give them food by donating to the food pantry...that's the love of God working through you. When you are worried people will be cold this winter so you bring in clothes for them...that's the love of God working through you. When you know people will celebrate the holiday alone so you provide a meal and sit with them that day instead of being with your own family...that's the love of God working through you. When you help people have a place to live by assisting with their rent payment or utility bills...that's the love of God working through you. That love will change their lives and ultimately the lives of others they know and the city where they live.

V – DON'T JUST SAY IT:

As you leave here today I want you to do so knowing that love is much more than a word or an emotion. It's a way of life that is guided by the abiding presence of God in your hearts. It is the most powerful tool a Christian has to work with. God calls us simply to love the world on his behalf and that's how he started his Kingdom, how he is building his Kingdom, and how he will conclude his Kingdom...all with love.

Love God and then love each other. It's a pretty simple thing to understand. But if we grasp it and live it we will claim the city of Bucyrus and beyond for Jesus Christ.

AMEN