

Going Deeper

February 28, 2010

1 John 4:7-20

God is love. We have heard it before and read it before. We can look all through the Bible and find examples of God's love for His people. Alexandria wrote these words to Nicholas II who would become the last Tsar of Russia:

I love you - those three words have my life in them.

That is what God's love is for us. His life is the definition of those three words. His life through Jesus was given to us because He loves us. 1 John 4:7 begins with a definition and declaration of love from God to us and instruction for us about love. The Greek word that He is calling us to have between one another is Agapao. It is defined as: to welcome, to entertain, to be fond of, to love dearly. I love the word "welcome" in that definition. To truly love someone is to welcome them into our lives and heart. It is to welcome them into our home.

After John calls us to love one another he says, "because God is love." That love in the Greek is Agape love, defined as: brotherly love, affection, good will, or benevolence. How can we pass up the word benevolence in that definition? He doesn't have to love us, but does. We don't do a whole lot to be loveable, but he loves us anyway.

In this passage, also, John gives us another test for those that call themselves Christians. He says, "Anyone who does not love, does not know God." That reminds me of the movie "Remember the Titans". In one scene a player's dad is up in arms because the white coach replaced him with a black player. He storms into the office ranting and raving about how good his son is and makes some derogatory comments about African Americans. The coach settles him down and the dad leaves. One of the black coaches says, "Well, I guess we don't have to worry about hearing from him anymore." The white coach says, "I do. I serve on the deacon board with him at church." We can't associate ourselves with the Creator and giver of love if we don't express our own love for God and our neighbor.

John goes on to once again tell us about the confidence we can have in our salvation. If we abide with God by abiding in love, we don't have to fear the second coming. In fact he says, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." If we accept the perfect love of Jesus, we can live in comfort knowing that we have a place with Him in Heaven. I think my favorite verse in this passage is verse 19. It says, "We love because he first loved us." He isn't waiting for me to love Him to love me. He loved first. What an example for us to follow. What kind of reputation would our church have in the community if we loved first?

Group Discussion

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13. How does Paul define love and the importance of love?
2. Considering the definitions of love written above, what is so difficult about loving each other?
3. What is an atoning sacrifice? (see Hebrews 9:10-10:14 and/or Exodus 30)
4. What does it mean for God's love to be made complete in us?
5. Do people fear eternity? What do you think they fear most?
6. How would you define your relationship with your neighbors? Your family? Are verses 20 and 21 convicting to you or an encouragement?

Personal reflection

1. Read John 3:16, Romans 5:8 and commit them to memory. Write in your own words how much God loves you.
2. Read Romans 10:9-11. Have you been saved? Write out or share with someone, your testimony.
3. Read Acts 1:4-8. This is the Spirit that John talks about in 1 John 4:13. How have you seen the Spirit work in you?
4. Show love to a neighbor this week and if you are married involve your spouse, and if you have kids involve your kids. Email andy@northviewchristian.org with some of the ideas you came up with.