

SUMMER OF LOVE

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

1 John 4.7-12
August 11, 2013

Prepared by James R. Wilson
Jim@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 Ext. 112

I. Connecting With One Another

Why do you think so many popular songs deal with the experience of human love? What has been one way that you have experienced unconditional love?

II. Introduction to this Series and Study

In or study of 1 John we have continued to see John's deep pastoral concern for the community of Jesus followers. John challenges the incorrect notion held by a significant number, that Jesus was a spirit-being who only seemed to be human, and urges them to adhere to the Apostles' teaching and re-unite with the faith community. John also fervently appeals to believers to not only experience God's love but to live in that love with one another, allowing the Holy Spirit to be fully manifested in their lives.

Our passage this week, 1st John 4.7-12, returns us to a familiar emphasis - the love of God that is revealed by and made incarnate in Jesus Christ, and the love of God that is to be revealed by and incarnate in us.

III. Study the Text

- a. Begin by reading the Gospel of John 1.1-18. How do verses 14 and 18 help to define the idea of Jesus "incarnating" the love and Being of God? (**Note:** The word incarnate means to embody or personify or to make flesh.) How do these verses compare to 1 John 1.1-3?
- b. With that in mind, read through 1 John 4.7-12. How many times does John use the word "love" in these six verses? (**Note:** The phrase "Dear friends" is from the same Greek word that is translated "love" in these verses.)
- c. Look at 1 John 4.7-8. What, according to John, is the source and origin of love? Trace John's line of reasoning in these verses beginning with his reference to "Dear Friends" or "Dear ones who are loved by God."
Verse 7: Loved by God, therefore _____, because _____
Verse 8: Whoever does not love _____, because _____
- d. Verse 8 includes John's central emphasis - "God is love." Unpack this a little. If the essential quality of God's character and being is love what then can we conclude about God's actions, God's will, God's intentions for us, and God's plan for this world and all of creation?
- e. The syntax of the phrase "God is love" emphasizes that God is the origin and source of love. Why would it be incorrect to turn this phrase around and say "love is God?"
- f. In 1 John 4.9-10 John focuses on the means by which God revealed divine love to us. John 3.16 is a familiar verse. How does it relate to verses 9-10? Why is it significant and unparalleled for God

to reveal divine love by taking on flesh and blood - why not just speak it through a prophet or through inspired written words?

- g. In verse 10 John stresses that not only did Jesus take on flesh and blood to convey God's love to us but that he was an "atoning sacrifice for our sins." How do the following verses give a description of what "atoning sacrifice" means:

John 1:29 _____

Mark 10:45 _____

Romans 3:21-24 _____

Romans 5:1, 8, 9) _____

Romans 8:1-4 _____

Ephesians 2:1-8 _____

Colossians 1:12-14 and 19-23 _____

1 Peter 18-19 _____

How do these things help define what the divine love of God is like?

- h. 1 John 4:11-12 include the conclusion that since God is love and since God has demonstrated divine love for us through Jesus, we then ought to love one another. How does our love for one another make God's love "complete" (verse 12)? **Note:** It is helpful to understand the term "complete" means "reaching its aim" or "fulfilling its purpose."

What are some practical ways you can demonstrate the love of God:

- 1) Toward your spouse and/or family members? _____
 - 2) Toward other believers? _____
 - 3) Toward your neighbor, co-workers, friends, others in need? _____
- _____

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Take some time to evaluate yourself with regard to 1) knowing that you are loved by God; 2) experiencing Jesus' "atoning sacrifice" through which you are forgiven of your sins and made to be at one with God; and 3) how you are responding to the love of God by loving others.
- b. Are there specific people with whom you need to reconcile a broken relationship or to whom you need to demonstrate Christ-like love? What steps will you take to do so?

V. Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Pray for yourself to be one who incarnates the love of Jesus to people around you - your spouse, family members, extended family, other believers, others who need to know God's love.
- b. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit so that divine love - the fruit of the Spirit - would grow and be manifested in and through you.
- c. Pray for the ministries and people of Good Shepherd to manifest the divine love of God with one another and in our community..

In order for love to be genuine it has to be above all a love for our neighbor. We must love those who are nearest to us in our own family (and church family). From there love spreads toward whoever may need us.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta