

FBC NIXA DNOW – Sunday Morning

Message: Christianity is Visible –

*The Love of God **Shown in Christ and Seen in Christians***

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-12

Introduction: I consider it a great blessing to be here with you today and an honor to be teaching God’s Word before his church here in Nixa. Through the years I’ve had a lot of unique connections with you and your pastors.

- First, my grandpa who lives in Nixa, who is a member at Hopedale Baptist in Ozark, and who is in attendance today sponsored me to go on a mission trip that combined both his church and you all back in 2012. So, there may have been a few of you who were on mission trip with me 14 years ago.
- Second, when I was a student at Southwest Baptist University, I was a member and intern at Freshwater Church working with the student ministry under Kurt Osterloh’s leadership.
- Third, while at Freshwater, they hosted a “preaching symposium” where many young guys pursuing a call to ministry were to prepare a sermon and have that sermon critiqued by a sitting panel of pastors. One of those pastors on that panel was none other than your pastor, Tim Haupt. And I while I don’t want to take any more time away from our time in God’s Word – I do want to say that while I barely remember how poor that sermon was – what I do remember is how kind you were. You said something to the effect of: *“you stayed in Scripture stuck to teaching the passage you were in – and I’m pretty sure it was you of the three who said I pronounced ‘naked’ wrong.”* Why I said it in Galatians 2, I don’t know. But your kindness, and the encouragement you gave me, has stuck with me ever since.

Transition: Well, church we are going to be in **1 John 4:7-12** this morning, so if you would turn there in your Bibles.

- Let me say, it has been a great weekend with your students. Our DNOW theme this weekend was “**Gravitate**,” and with that theme we looked at ***The Natural Draw of Sin, God Drawing Us to Himself***, what it looks like to

Draw Near to God, and this morning we will be looking at *Drawing Others to God* – by seeing that **Christianity is Visible.**

Prayer: Before I preach God’s Word, will you join me in a word of **prayer**

PRAY

Opening (FIL Fishing – “important”): My father-in-law owns a farm up in northern Missouri where he lives, and on that farm, he has a lake where he will occasionally take our kids fishing. Now, my father-in-law is a teacher by nature. So, when he recently took Judah fishing, he tried to teach him what it means to be (or what it looks like) to be a fisherman. While on the lake, he consistently told Judah “...now THIS is really important.”

This is what the apostle John is doing in his letter, the letter of 1 John. **John is older**, referring to his audience as “little children” and he **consistently repeats** what he believes is most important for Christians to hear – **emphasizing by repetition.**

John’s message is simple: Christianity is visible.

While the gospel is *heard*. Christianity is *lived*.

And a person **can know that they know** Christ if their life is distinguishable by:

- Ongoing belief in Jesus as the only hope of salvation
- A heart to obey Christ.
- And a love for another

And while works are by **no means** the way we **attain** salvation, they are most certainly **markers** by which we may be **assured** of our salvation.

It is this last one we will focus on this morning: **love for one another.**

John tells us the purpose of his writing is *so that we may know we have* eternal life (5:13) and about love, the third, he says: *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.”*

Set up:

In the verses we’re in this morning, John talks about our love for one another being **rooted** in the love of God that is most **exemplified** in the love of Christ.

He talks about **loves divine origin** (7-8), **love’s greatest demonstration** (9-10), and **love’s practical intention** (11-12).

Here’s how I want to approach the text we’re in this morning. While “**because** God said so” should be and is enough of an answer for the question of “**why we’re to love one another**”... I think our passage gives us more than that.

So, I want us to see **three reasons we are to love one another** and so visibly give witness of love of Christ: Namely, because (1) **God is love**, because (2) **God loved us**, and because (3) **Christ is visible in our love for one another**.

Transition: Let’s look at the Bible together in **1 John 4:7-12** (“in honor of God’s Word, if you are able, would you **stand** with me as I read our passage”)

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-12

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. || **9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. || **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. – **1 John 4:1-12**

The first reason John gives us to love one another is because:

1. BECAUSE... GOD IS LOVE (7-8)

7 Beloved (notice, John loves the people he's writing to), let us **love one another** (there is the command), **for** (here is the why) **love is from God**, and **whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

What is love?

- Is it the ooey-gooey, butterflies in your chest feeling when you've found someone you like?
- Is it pleasure? Or intimacy?
- Is it a cheesy gordita church from taco bell at the end of the day after you've crammed in a bunch of work?

Is love... love? "Love is love," right?

If we pretend for a moment that common statement makes logical sense... Love being love is a statement of relative truth. Meaning, that if you believe love is love, **your** definition of love (and **your** definition of love & **your** definition of love) is love. It's a "shifting/circular definition" – which really is no definition at all.

- For you it could be walking on the beach with a man by your side
- For some it's romance with the same sex.
- For Joseph Smith it was polygamy.
- For a university professor it was minors.
- For Bundy it was brutality.
- For Hitler it was an Arian race.
 - And so down the slippery slope you go, pretending it doesn't exist, as you slide without acknowledgement where that understanding inevitably leads.

"Love is love" just means **"you do you."** And telling that to a depraved people is disastrous. Consider the book of **Judges**, **"where everyone did what was right in their own eyes."**

"You do you" has never been good counsel...

The end of the common cultural catechism "love is love" inevitably becomes my enjoyment even if it comes at your expense.

Is this not hatred?

- Hate: I sacrifice you for my benefit.
- Love: I sacrifice myself for your benefit.

Transition: What if I told you love is not self-expression, but self-denial? That love is not self-preservation, but self-sacrifice?

To the Christian, these pursuits are seen not as love – but the selfish pursuits of our former life.

End point:

Love is not love. God is love.

Love does not shift in its definition. It *cannot*. Because God *does not change*. He is the same today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

And here's the good news: Love is not defined by a distant God and hopefully discovered by humankind's exploration.

God defines love through His covenants in the Old Testament and He has ultimately demonstrated love in a moment of human history like no other.

Point number 2:

The second reason we are to love one another is:

2. BECAUSE...GOD HAS LOVED US (9-10)

9 In this the love of God was made manifest (*made known*) among us, that God sent his only Son *into the world*, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Let's break down these two verses and see three things that are true about the love of God displayed in the cross of Christ:

A) GOD SENT JESUS TO YOU (9)

9 In this the love of God was made manifest (*made known*) among us, that God sent his only Son *into the world*, **so that** we might **live through him**.

God made known his love *for* us by sending His Son *to* us.

And here's the thing. God acted first. God is doing the work (the action) first. Even though we would reject Him, He initiated the means by which we would be reconciled to Him.

The story of our salvation doesn't begin with us seeking God, it begins with God seeking us.

Let me say it this way: I think it would be true to say that it's nerve-wracking telling someone you love them for the very first time. I can still remember where I was and how I felt telling my wife that I loved her for the first time. In the context of a relationship, it can be sometimes a war for who's going to say that four letter word first, right?

Why? What are we scared of? REJECTION!

And so, in fear of rejection, sometimes we just don't act.
No one wants to say, "*I love you,*" and hear in return, "*yeah...I'm good.*"

No one wants to say that four letter word "love" toward another person unless they **know** – unless they are **assured** – they will not be rejected.

This is love.

Knowing that he would be rejected and despised – God loved us – and proved it by sending Jesus.

Illustration: This is how Christianity is different from every other world religion. In other religions everyone is trying to do all they can to get to God. In Christianity, even with all we had done, Jesus came to us.

Even though we disobeyed the Lord, and loved darkness, the Light of Life came to the land of the living-dead – so that *in Him*, we might live *for Him*, and *with Him*, forever.

“in this is love...”

God came to us.

B) GOD SENT JESUS, DESPITE YOU (10a)

10 In this is love, *not that we have loved God but that he loved us*

At first glance it may seem odd that John added the phrase, “*not that you loved God.*” But I think he did it on purpose to show, or remind us, of something very important.

ILLUS: Growing up I had my own Honda dirt bike, because growing up in small town Missouri, its common that houses you buy have land sold with them, and not just a lot. Well, when I was 15 years old, I sold my Honda CRF-80 dirt bike...can you imagine why? Well, with the money from selling it, along with money I had earned mowing lawns, I bought my very own first car. The car was a used 1998 red mustang convertible and buying that car, I believed, was one of the best decisions I was ever going to make. A used car salesman walked my dad and I around the car showing us all of the neat things this fine-tuned piece of machinery had to offer. You know, like a window, and airbags... A few weeks after purchasing the convertible, a big storm hit my hometown in West Plains, and like any other car would be, my car was sitting outside in the driveway. The next morning, I woke up as I always did at the crack of dawn before it was light outside, to go run with our cross-country team. Well, as I got in my car with my shoes in hand, socks and sandals on my feet, my feet felt weird... they were soaked. Upon further observation, I noticed water was easily able to leak between the convertible top and door frame. The car did not even come close to sealing, and therefore became like a fishbowl after a heavy rain.

My car leaked – something I did not know or expect when purchasing the car.

Here's what happened: The car salesman gas presented a car to me without flaws, fearing that if I knew its flaws, I wouldn't want anything to do with the car. I wouldn't purchase it.

Some of us feel that if God *really* knew us, he would want nothing to do with us.

However, for those of us who have come to know Christ,
we hopefully know the opposite is true.

**God knows everything about us, our dings, our shortcomings, all of our flaws,
and yet he still bought our freedom with his blood.**

Ask: Did Christ pay for a people who were spotless?

- **No!** He didn't buy the freedom of anyone who wasn't broken. Because there wasn't anyone who wasn't.

God only saves *undeserving* people...because that's all there is.

Those that trust Him have come to know this.

"6 ...while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." – **Ephesians 2:8**

So, dear believer: he knew your sin (and he still knows your struggles),
but He loved you anyway...

If you're **visiting** us today, or you wouldn't consider yourself a follower of Christ, hear me today: **God knows your sin, but Christ came for sinners.**

What love is this, that God would love us, despite us.

**Sinner, do you fear coming to the Christ who's come... *for sinners?*
Take not Satan's counsel to stay away... Wounds and all – **Go to Christ!****

C) GOD SENT JESUS FOR YOU (10b)

After John mentions that God loved us, despite our hostility toward Him...He says that He was:

Sent... *to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Now, I highly doubt any of us has used the word propitiation in our vocabulary this past week, so I'd like to take a moment to teach the truth of what John is saying here.

Everyone, because of their sin is ultimately guilty before God and deserving of His wrath.

- Romans 3:10: no one is righteous, no not one.
- Romans 3:23: all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
- Isaiah 64:6: all of our righteous deeds are even like filthy rags
- Romans 6:23: the wages (or proper punishment) of sin is death.

God is a **just** God and there for sin **has to be** punished, lest he be unjust.

Well, here's the good news. *It was...*

And this is what propitiation means: Jesus took upon Himself the full punishment for our sin, satisfying the wrath of God, and reconciling man to God.

God didn't just overlook the consequences of sin. That would make Him unjust.
God instead punished His Son in our place.

The good news of Jesus Christ could be summarized in four words:
Jesus in my place.

So, believer in the room...let me tell you something remarkable:
You will not bear the punishment for your sin,
because Christ bore it in your place.

God sent Jesus to die in our place – the death we deserved for the sin we committed – to give us life we don't deserve.

Read: So, we gather here on our Lord's Day first and foremost to celebrate the matchless love of God seen in the fact that:

Jesus, being sent by His Father (John 20:21) and acting in obedience to His will (John 6:38), came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17), bear witness to the truth (John 18:37), call sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17), save the lost (Luke 19:10), and be punished in our place (Isaiah 53:6) by dying a substitutionary death (2 Corinthians 5:21), so that those who trust in Him (Romans 10:9) are reconciled to God (1 Peter 3:18) and have eternal life (John 10:10) not by earning, attaining, or achieving a righteousness of their own, but by receiving the gift of His (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus died in our place, paying the debt we owed for the sin we committed, so that we might be with Him forever, all for His glory!

Respond (unbeliever):

So, how might you respond today if you don't know Jesus: **BELIEVE.**

if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved – Romans 10:9

Respond (believer):

How might you respond to this great truth? **Share and show the love of Christ.**

Which brings me to my third and final reason we are to love one another

3. BECAUSE...GOD IS GLORIFIED IN OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER (11-12)

Transition: Because of our gratefulness to God for His demonstration of love toward us in the cross and thereby our subsequent connection to the very God who is love, we are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us (as He did on the cross), we also ought to love one another.

our gratefulness to God should be visible in our graciousness to one another

12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

No one can “see” God in His essence:

One commentator said: The word “seen” implies a close scrutiny or examination. In other words, no person has seen God “up close and personal” in His unveiled essence, glory, and majesty.

- In the OT, Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex 33:22-23) and Isaiah in the temple only saw a visions or revelations of God called, often referred to as theophanies and therefore they weren’t consumed.

But why would John mention that no one has seen God right here. Is it out of place? I don’t think so...

It begs the question

“If no one has ever seen God... how then can He be known?”

And I think John’s point is this:

(*slow) No one can see God...but they can see you. (*point).

- They see how you treat one another and talk to one another in person and on social media.
- They see how you serve and sacrifice for others, for your friends, and even for your enemies.
- They look at your compassion and care.

...and by God’s grace and our faithfulness, I hope they the God who is love.

I hope they see Christ.

John Stott said:

"The unseen God who was once revealed in His Son is now revealed in His people...when they love one another."

"God is glorified and prayerfully seen when..."

- people know we are His disciples by our love (John 13)
- we take the light of Christ to a dark world
- when we imitate Christ
- when people see our good deeds and give Him glory
- when we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us
- when we live holy lives in obedience to His commands
- when we share the good news of the love of Christ in the gospel.

God's love is perfected in us and made complete in us as we love one another.

WRAPPING UP:

So, as we conclude let's look at how this section began in verses 7 & 8. It began with a command, followed by a reminder.

7 Beloved, **let us love** (C) one another, **for love is from God**, and *whoever loves has been born of God and knows God* (R). **8** *Anyone who does not love does not know God* (R), **because God is love** (P).

Here's the push of verses 7 and 8 in a nutshell:

It doesn't matter who you think you are... and it doesn't matter if you grasp at an intellectual level the gospel I preached...

- if your life is not characterized by a love for others and is instead marked by hatred (even toward you brothers in Christ)... it doesn't matter who you think you are... *you don't know God.*

**You can try to stack up all the reasons you shouldn't love someone else, but I can give you one reason greater than any you may come up with
...and His name is Jesus.**

The love God has shown you has given you no room to say...

"I don't love them because they don't deserve it"

Because neither did you.

If our enmity with God has been changed by the love of God, any anger against one another ought to be changed as well. And the same gracious love God has shown us, we're called to show one another.

We love because God first loved us, and if He is the picture of perfect love, loves very origin... HE SHOWS US THE VERY PEOPLE AND THE TRUE WAY TO LOVE OTHERS.

CONCLUSION:

So...what is love? The love we're supposed to have...

- it's not a word that *simply* means **intense attraction**.
- It's not a word that *merely* means **mutual affection**.
- It's a word that *with it comes* **selfless, sacrificial action**.

Love is less about pursuing our own personal pleasure and more about laying down our lives in the pattern of our Savior.

God didn't love you because you impressed Him.

God didn't love you because you're loveable.

God loved you because you were desperate.

- And His love made this undeserving guy and many of you, His children. He didn't have to... He didn't owe us anything.

**If our lives have been dramatically changed by God,
our lives should be marked by a distinct love for our neighbor.**

RECAP: We are called to love one another because (1) **God is love**, because (2) **God loved us**, and because (3) **Christ is visible in our love for one another**.

"Let's love one another and let's make Christianity visible."

For the sake of the world seeing Christ in us.