

July 19, 2015
Sermon for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday after VBS
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
1 John 4:7-21

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

1 John 4:7–21 (ESV)

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. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Every year, I think about how many of you don't have a clue what we did during Vacation Bible School. You know we had it; you may hear some of the songs or see some decorations but not what the children learned. So this morning I decided to share a part of the lessons that the 60+ children learned this week.

God says to you and to me in 1 John 4:19, "*We love because He first loved us.*" Remember the experiment that we did in the Children's message? After the water pours into the cup or bowl and fills up to the top of it, the water spills over the edge!

This experiment is a very good way for us to think about God's words "*We love because He first loved us.*"

In the same way that the water from the faucet will fill up the cup or the bowl, God our heavenly Father has also filled us with His love!

We know that God fills us with His love because it is written in the Bible, in Romans 5:5: "*God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*"

After the water gets to the top of the cup or bowl, what happens to it? Yes! The water spills over the edge!

Now think about God's love, which has been poured into you and into me like water into a cup. What will happen when God's love fills us up to the top? Just like water overflowing a cup, God's love also overflows us!

That is why God has said in the theme verse for our Vacation Bible School,

“We love because He first loved us.”

We show love for others because God first showed love for us.

We treat other people lovingly because God has treated us so lovingly by sending us His Son, Jesus.

We fill other people with God’s love because God has filled us with so much love in the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5–6) that we overflow, like a cup or a bowl sitting under a faucet in the sink. *“We love because He first loved us.”*

These words have tied together all the Bible Stories we have studied together this week in Vacation Bible School.

The first night we learned about David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1–51). In 1 Samuel, we learned how God’s love for David made David feel very brave, even when David faced a dangerous giant named Goliath. God wants you to know that His love for you is strong enough to give you courage and make you feel brave, just as David felt brave. We know that God’s love will give you courage and bravery because God has promised so in His Word: *“Be strong and courageous. . . . The Lord your God is with you wherever you go”* (Joshua 1:9).

Our Lord Jesus also said to us, *“In the world you will have tribulation [that is, trouble]. But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

I wonder: does anyone here ever have times when you feel afraid? I have times when I feel afraid too.

I heard a presentation earlier this week asking us who or what our Goliath was, the speaker didn’t give himself enough credit because he really made us think.

He made us look at the things we are afraid of.

Whether they were actually physical things or whether they were actually things that couldn't really hurt us, like our pride or our prejudices against our neighbors. But God praise be to God because He takes us above and beyond all of that.

God filled us with His love with His Gospel where we learn that He gave us Jesus to die and rise again for us.

Because Jesus died and rose again, we have nothing to fear!

God's love gives us courage!

In our second day of Vacation Bible School, we learned about a woman named Deborah in Judges 4. In His love for His people, God filled Deborah with wisdom so that she could show God's love to the people of Israel by leading them through a very difficult time.

God wants you to know that, when He fills you with His love, He also gives you the gift of wisdom so that you will be able to show His love to other people around you. God promises in His book of First Corinthians, "*You are wise in Christ*" (4:10).

God also says that if you ever feel like you lack wisdom, you should pray to God, "*who gives generously to all*" (James 1:5).

In addition to courage of David in 1 Samuel and the wisdom given to Deborah, God's love also saves us and delivers us from all evil!

That is what we learned about on the third day of Vacation Bible School. In Daniel chapter 3 God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from an angry king named Nebuchadnezzar.

In the same way that God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God also saved us by sending His Son, Jesus.

The Bible declares that, when Jesus died and rose again, He saved us from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.

God also promises us in His Bible that, now that He has poured His love into us, nothing shall separate us again from His love.

This is what God promises us: “...*that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 8:38–39)

In our fourth day of Vacation Bible School, God taught us that He also gives us His gift of faith when He fills us with His love.

In Mark 10, Jesus healed a man named Bartimaeus, who was blind. The love of Jesus did more than give Bartimaeus the ability to see. The love of Jesus also gave Bartimaeus the ability to believe all of God’s promises in Christ!

When God poured out His love for you, filling you with the love of Jesus, He also gave you the gift of faith.

God’s gift of faith makes it possible for you to believe God’s promises in Christ, which include your forgiveness of sins and your eternal life.

But God’s promises are not for you only. God’s promises of forgiveness and life are also for the people in your family, the people you see at school, and everyone else you know.

Because God’s promises are for all people everywhere, God wants to use you to show His love to other people.

That is what our last Vacation Bible School story was all about.

On our last day we learned from Acts 9 that God sent a man named Ananias to a man named Saul in order to tell Saul about the love of Jesus.

Ananias is a very good example of the theme verse for our entire Vacation Bible School: *"We love because He first loved us."*

Remember, up until the time that Jesus knocked Saul off of his high horse (he was probably standing and praying at the time) on the road to Damascus, Saul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, persecuted Christians left and right. He was not one that any Christian approached willingly. I don't think that hated is too strong of a word. Most Christians, probably even Ananias, would have thought that Saul had gotten exactly what he deserved!

I mean, listen to what Ananias said when Jesus told him to go to Saul:

"...Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." Acts 9:13–14 (ESV)

Because, and only because God greatly loved Ananias, Ananias was able to love Saul.

Because God greatly loves you, you also are able to love others in God's name and by God's power.

How is it possible for each of us to have the courage and wisdom and faith we need to show God's love for others?

It is possible because each of us—you and me both—is like a glass or a bowl that has been set into a sink.

Remember what happens when you slowly turn on the water and allow the water to pour into the bowl?

That's right! The water fills the bowl and begins to overflow.

God promises to do the same thing for you and through you:

"We love because He first loved us."

How does the overflowing love of God help you in your daily life?

Think about the people who are around you every day.

Here are some examples of what God's overflowing love for you will do:

- Children, God can help you do better in honoring your father and your mother, your grandmother and your grandfather. Adults: God can help you honor and obey other authorities, whether we like them or not
- Children & Adults, God can give you a kinder and more patient attitude toward your older or younger brothers or sisters. Those in your earthly family and all children of God.
- God can strengthen all of us against temptations and sins, even when your friends and classmates and co-workers choose to do the wrong thing.

Just like a bowl overflowing with water, God has poured out so much of His love for you in Christ Jesus that there is more love than you can ever hold!

Allow the love of God to overflow you and to spill onto others. Just like believers before you—David and Deborah, Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego, Bartimaeus and Ananias— and just like your fellow Christians today.

God has poured His love into you and into me. *"We love because He first loved us."*

Children and adults, say it with me: *"We love because He first loved us."*

We had a great Vacation Bible School! Let's not leave what we learned last week behind, but let's carry it forward, through the rest of our lives.

Thank you for all volunteered your time and talents and helped in any way. I pray that you are blessed by your actions and most especially by the forgiveness and grace found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we proclaimed and will continue to proclaim!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria