

This morning we are starting a new series for Easter on the power of the resurrection. This is part of the calendar we set aside to meditate even more on what the death and resurrection of Christ mean.

Christian may understand that this is foundational to our faith and salvation. But we can be less sure about what difference the resurrection makes in our lives today. Sometimes we can wonder how can it help us now?

This morning we are going to talk about how the power of Christ's resurrection empowers us to love. Because Christian love should look different than the world. Christian love should be empowered differently than the world.

Turn with me to 1 John 4:7-12. These few verses will tell us the difference the resurrection makes for the love of God.

I. True Love only comes from God (v. 7-8).

This is the foundational truth we must understand about love.

True love only comes from God.

The only way to understand what love is, is to understand God.

And to understand God is to understand love.

Verse 7, **"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."**

We will talk more about how we should love one another later.

For now I want us to focus on that first part of the phrase.

Ultimately, all love comes from God.

There is all kinds of ways we use the words love.

We describe our love for tacos, football, or the puppy dog love of teenagers.

All of this love comes from God.

But ultimately, and more fully what is true love can only come from God.

There are a couple of different ways to understand this.

One way is to recognize that love itself is a gift from God.

Human beings only have the capacity to love because of God.
It is part of the grace of God that He allows us to experience and love each other.

This is part of what it means to be made in the image of God.
We are reflections of God and we bear His mark.
Part of being made in the image of God means that we are beings of love.
We are created to love each other.
We are created to love our families and our spouses.
We are created to love animals and creation.
The feeling of love that you feel when you experience something incredible.
Or the feeling of falling in love.
Or the love that only comes after decades of life and facing hardship together.
That kind of love, ultimately, comes from God.
It is His gift and it is what we're made to be.

But the second part of the verse implies love only comes from those who know and are born of God.

This means that only believers truly love.

This could imply that only followers of God truly love.
That is only those who believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead who know what love is.
Unbelievers would object and complain.
They would say that they know what love is because look at how they love.
Or look at their marriages or relationships.

Some of this rebuke means all our loves are infected and impacted by sin.
So even our best attempts at love are imperfect and selfish.
Or our best moments of selflessness are still marred by sin.
But whatever love we do have is just a gift from God.
And the only way to truly know love is to know God.

Verse 8, **"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."**

The only way to know love is to know God.

You cannot have one without the other.

This is like the great chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13.

The love chapter we normally read at weddings.

But that chapter is not about marriage or only of concern to those who are entering into that mystical union with one another.

The love that is described there describes God.

It describes the way God feels about us.

It describes part of who God is.

It would be worth studying and reading that chapter to just ask

"What does this show me about how God loves?"

What does this reveal about God's attributes?

There is also a rebuke here for those of us who claim to know God.

Those of us who might claim to be Christians.

Who claim to be followers of God.

We must be people who love.

We must be full of the love of God.

We must be people who love our enemies.

We must be people who love those who persecute us.

We must be people who love our neighbors and those around us.

We must be people who love those that the world tells us to hate.

We must be people who love those we are tempted to see as destroyers of our country.

We must be people who love those that we do not want to spend time around.

Those who are hard for us to love.

We must love people who vote differently than we do.

We must love those who are confused and struggle with their gender.

We must love those who are gay.

We must love those who are atheists and those who hate God.

We have to love others, if we truly know God.

And there have always been these people.
Who claim the name of Jesus, but believe they do not have to love.
On the extremes, they have worn white hoods and carried out crusades.
More subtly, they claim we don't have to love our enemies.
Or that our love is allowed to be harsh and cruel.
This is who we are often tempted to be and to become.
But we must resist.
We must be people who love.
Who love not like the world, but like Christ loved us.

Because if we do not love, we do not truly know God.
Knowing God must lead to love for God.
It must lead to actually loving the people around us as if we have been loved.
If you do not love, then you don't know God.

This is why Jesus explains all the commandments and law is wrapped up in the commandment of love.
We must love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors.
We have to love everyone around us because even the one we hate is our neighbor.

If we fail to love, then we do not know God.
A failure to love our enemies is a failure to love God.
A failure to love those who are difficult is a failure to love God.
To be born of God is to love others.

Some of us would complain or object.
Some of us might be more prickly personalities.
Or some of us might not be naturally loving.
It may be something that comes difficult to us.
This verse and passage removes our excuses.
To be Christian is to love truly because it comes from God.

God is love.

This is a marvelous and misunderstood phrase.

Because everyone loves it.

Because it means that God is love.

It is one of his attributes.

It is a part of who He is.

He cannot be God without being love.

Even the world loves the phrase "God is love."

But the world does not get to define what love is.

The world has phrases like "love is love" or "love is love is love"

And they want to change Biblical morality.

They want to shift what God says about human sexuality, gender, and marriage based on "love."

But what love is.

What love means, does not get to be defined by any of us.

God defines what love is.

We also have those on the far right who want nothing to do with the God of love either.

They want to change what God's love means to make it seem like God loves no one.

Or that He only loves some Christians and hates everyone else.

They want to overplay wrath and ignore worship music that is too love-focused.

But no one gets to define love.

We cannot just say, "Speak the truth in love" and change what love looks like to justify our actions.

I do not get to define what love is.

God defines what love is.

He is love.

We do not have permission to change what love means or what it looks like.

We have to adjust our understanding of love based on God.
We cannot change God based on what we think love is.
Because true love,
Love that reflects the God of love only comes from God.
What love looks like is what Christ did for us.
And how He loved us.

II. True love is demonstrated by Jesus (v. 9-10)

This is love.

Verse 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 love through him."**

When we want to know what love is, it is Jesus.
He makes the love of God manifest.
It is here and revealed in the world in a way we can see.
In a way we can understand and smell and touch.
It is manifest and revealed to us.
When we say God is love,
And that God defines love.
It is hard to know what it means.
Or what that actually looks like.
But Jesus shows us.
Jesus is the fullest manifestation of God's love.
He is the incarnation of love.
He is love wrapped up in flesh.
When we wonder what love looks like, we just have to look at Jesus.
He is love.

This means that everything Jesus does is love.
Because He is love.
And He always loves perfectly in every way in every instance.
Every single story you read in the gospels is an example of perfect love.
His birth.

His every miracle from the turning of water to wine to calming the storm was love.

His every parable was taught in love.

His rebuke and rejection of the Pharisees were done in perfect love.

His every rebuke of his disciples for their lack of faith was in perfect love.

His eating and drinking with sinners.

Even His cleansing of the temple,

All of it and His every action was done in perfect love.

He showed what love looks like.

It was made manifest to us because **"God sent his only Son into the world."**

God willingly sent His only Son to die for us.

Who among us would do this?

Who would sacrifice our only child or our only son to death?

I don't consider myself a helicopter parent, but I can be cautious.

I don't like heights and find them dangerous.

So I don't want my kids climbing stuff.

I wouldn't let them go into the street or even play football.

Yet God sends His Son somewhere dangerous.

He sends Him into the world.

And He sends Him willingly to His death.

He sends Jesus down to earth knowing that He will die.

Because He loves us.

Verse 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."**

This is love.

It was undeserved.

We did not love God.

We did not cry out begging for God to save us.

We did not pray for deliverance.

It is not like God went to the pound and found an adorable puppy who just needed love.

We are like a rabid dog who does nothing but bite everyone and tear up everything in the house.

The only logical thing to do would be to put us down before we could bring more destruction and death.

And yet, God loved us.

He loved us even though we did not deserve it.

He loves us even now even though we do not deserve it.

The story of the gospel is the story of love.

It is the revelation and manifestation of love.

If you want to know what love is, look to Jesus.

Look at His death and resurrection.

Look at His willingness to die for those who hate Him.

Any of us would die for the people we love.

We would die for the people in our family.

Our spouses, children, grandchildren, or other family.

But no one dies for people who hate you.

Jesus does.

He goes to the cross to die for the people who want nothing to do with Him.

That is love.

It is a love that is pure and undefiled.

He dies for us.

We did not love Him, yet He loves us.

This still is true today by the way.

The people today right now, that hate God.

The people who are enemies of God and who have rejected Him.

The people we see and want nothing to do with.

The people we see as our enemies because of their rejection of the gospel.

They are the people Christ died for.

They are people Christ loves.

We must remember this.

Christ came for those we hate.
He did not just die for you and me..
He died for those people too.
Because He loves them.
And if He loves them now, how should we treat them?

This is something to meditate on and remember.
Because all of us daily do things that are unlovely.
Things that are annoying to others and that make us hard to love.
All of us have things in our past that make us feel undeserving of love.
God knows all of those things about us.
He knows our deepest shame.
He knows your darkest secrets.
He knows what you hide in the dark.
He knows the addiction you cannot shake.
He knows the doubts and fears that you hold.
He knows the things about you that are annoying and frustrating to people around you.
He knows all of the reasons that you should not be loved.
He knows all of the bad stuff.
And yet, He loves you.
He loves you even now.
He loves you even though you may have received His love and then ignored it.
He loves you more than you could possibly imagine.
He loves you enough to die for you.

And He sent His son to die for us.
He sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.
That is a big theological word.
The one mostly used in the Old Testament is atonement.
It is a beautiful one and it is one worth learning if it is new to you.
There is so much meaning in this word it is hard to get across.
It describes the sacrifices and animals that died for our sins.

It is the appeasing of God.
It is the satisfaction of His wrath and judgment.
Revelation is about the pouring out of God's judgment upon the world.
But we can escape that judgment because Jesus took it for us.

It is also about the reconciliation of God.
How God brings us back to Him.
Jesus restores the fracturing of the relationship so we can again walk with God in the cool of the day.

Jesus is the sacrifice that was necessary.
His death was what we needed.
And His death is what can make us whole.
His death is what can make and repair our relationship with God.
He removes the guilt of our sin.
He was the sacrifice we needed to take away our sins.
He is the one who cleanses us from sin.
He is the great physician who removes the cancer of sin that kills our souls.
He is all of this.
And He does all of this out of love.
Jesus came because He loves you.
He paid every price.
He was willing to do whatever it took in the ultimate rescue mission.
To save sinners from ourselves and from our sins.
What a demonstration of love.

III. True love is what we should give one another (v. 11-12).

IV.

Verse 11, **"Believed, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."**

If God so loved us.
What a phrase that is.
God has clearly loved us.
His love was demonstrated by every second of Jesus' earthly ministry.

His love for us was demonstrated by every moment of pain endured.
Every drop of blood that Christ spilled in prayer and in death was His love.

So, now that We have been loved that way, how should it affect us?
How should it change us?

What effect must this love have on us?

It should lead us to love.

We should love one another because we have been loved by Jesus.

Because we have been so changed and transformed by His love.

You see, the love of Jesus and the gospel.

The acceptance of the resurrection and faith in Jesus.

These are things that change and transform us.

The resurrection of Christ is not just a historical event.

It is not just something that we are meant to accept as a fact.

It is not just a belief that we hold in faith.

It is all of those things.

But it is not only those things.

The resurrection of Jesus also and actually does transform us.

It gives us the capacity and the ability to love truly and fully.

The resurrection is an encounter with love that leaves us changed.

Accepting the gospel will lead to a love of others.

It must.

It cannot not.

If you believe the gospel.

If you are a follower and disciple of Christ.

If you are a true Christian, then you will be a person who loves others.

As we feel the love of God, it goes out towards others.

Some will object.

Because maybe you do not want to consider yourself a loving person.

Maybe you think it is part of your personality to be a bit prickly.

Or you are more reserved and held off.

Maybe you like to keep people at a distance.
But that does not mean you get to be free of love.
It is not excuse.
If you have been loved by Jesus, if you have felt His love, then it changes who you are.
It makes you someone who can and does love.
And if you do not love others, then you do not know God.

Let me think of an example.
I am not a naturally outgoing person.
I have never been described as the life of the party.
I get anxious in crowds.
And I do not like to dance.
But there is one place that I danced a lot.
It was at my wedding.
When Brianna and I got married, I danced more than I ever have in my whole life.
I didn't have to be carried on the dance floor.
I didn't have to be talked into participating.
If anything, I had to be pulled off to talk and mingle with guests.
Why?
Not because I like dancing because I don't.
And I am not particularly talented at dancing.
But I was overwhelmed with the love of a groom.
And the love of a bride had transformed my heart and made me want to dance.
It worked to change who I was at the moment because I was filled with her love.

The resurrection of Jesus is far more powerful than that.
And it is not a onetime event.
The love of Jesus is something we should always carry and should always be working in our lives and hearts.

But how can we have this kind of love?

How can we actually do it?

We do it through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the transformation the gospel brings.

We do it because Christ loved us first.

Have you ever tried to love someone?

Is it easy?

Or is it hard?

I don't know about you but I find love difficult.

Or love is easy in the abstract.

It is nice to just say, "I love everyone!"

But then you start to actually meet people and it gets slightly more difficult.

Where does the power to love come from?

It does not come from ourselves.

We do not have it within us to be loving people.

We cannot manufacture more love.

Even when we might want to, we cannot create it.

The world knows this and it talks about love as a power.

Like it is something that just happens to our hearts and we have no control over.

This is why we talk about "falling out of love."

Or don't feel bad when we do not love someone.

Because we just throw up our hands and admit that we do not have the power to create love.

So, the power for true love cannot come from ourselves.

The power certainly does not come from other people.

Because the more you are around other people the harder it can become to love them.

It is easy to love and like people at a distance.

Sometimes great friendships can be ruined when you become roommates. I had a great friend in college, and our friendship couldn't handle us loving in the same dorm room.

By the end of the year we barely talked to one another.

Because the more you learn about people, the harder it can make it. Those little character flaws become a lot more annoying day after day.

Ultimately, the only power to love people comes from Jesus.

It is the gospel that empowers us.

The resurrection of Christ is what brings it together.

The resurrection of Jesus.

The power of the gospel allows us to actually love.

It is because we have been loved by God.

That is what allows us to love.

Those of us who have embraced the resurrection.

Who have embraced the gospel and believe that Christ did for us, we have been changed.

The love of God should and has changed us.

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

The love of God abides in us.

It fills us up.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the Spirit of love.

We can love one another because love is in us.

There are times you have felt the Holy Spirit help you.

He gives us the words to say when we do not know what to say.

He guides us when we do not know which direction to go.

Love also perfects us.

It is the love of God that transforms us and sanctifies us.

As we are filled with the love of God, we are changed by it.
The way you love the world proclaims the gospel.
Jesus told His disciples that the world will know you by your love for one another.
The world needs to hear our love.
Our love proclaims it and helps people see what love looks like.
Not the empty love of the world.
Not the love that fades.
Or the love that needs multiple partners just to survive.
Not the love that only sustains based on sexual chemistry.
Not the love that can only move forward if people are feeling it.
The world needs to see the love of God.
The love that only Believers can have.
The love of those who have been changed and transformed by the resurrection.

1. True love only comes from God, it is demonstrated by Jesus, and we should give it to others freely.
What if we left this place as people filled with resurrection love?
What if all of our interactions with people were guided by the love of God?
If every time we entered into a place, we brought the love of God there?
If every time we told someone about Jesus, we did it with love.
If every time we defended the faith or answered questions about Jesus, we did it with love?
What if every single thing we did in our lives was filled with the power of the love of God?
Because it should be. And because of what Jesus did for us it can be.
So let us go forth from this place as those filled with the love of God, ready to show His love to the world.