

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Lord Jesus, Come to Me with Your Love

- I. So that I may know God
- II. So that God may live in me
- III. So that I may live in love

Dear brothers and sisters of the Christ,

A person can almost imagine the old Apostle slowly dictating the words of our text. The subject is love. The Apostle John knew the love of God, perhaps better than we ever will. John received the expressions of Jesus' love firsthand and face to face and observed Jesus' love in action.

All love has its origin in the loving heart of God. Man was made in the image of God. As a result, Adam and Eve were created to be loving, freely giving individuals. Unfortunately, they lost the ability to love perfectly when they shattered their divine image by disobedience.

However, this disobedience did not keep God from loving them. He sent His one and only Son to take on our human flesh, humble Himself, and present Himself as an atoning sacrifice for all sins so that we might live through Him. **This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us.**

Everybody needs to feel loved. On a scale of the hierarchy of needs, the need to be loved has to be at the top. Love makes us feel that we have worth, that we are somebody. One of the most important things that a parent can do for a child's well-being is to love their child. It is also the directive that St. Paul give to husbands – **love your wives as Christ love the church and gave Himself up for her.** Do whatever it takes including sacrifice to express your love to you wives. The example for both husband and wife is Christ who laid down His life for each of us. Christmas and Good Friday are annual reminders of how deeply God loves us. These two events show us how serious our God is about adopting us into His family. God has found a way for us to be brought to Him and live in His world – for free. God's way is through Jesus Christ.

Jesus coming to us is a fitting theme for our midweek Advent services this year. **LORD JESUS, COME TO ME!** This evening we want to plead with Jesus, **COME TO ME WITH YOUR LOVE.**

First of all, come to me that I may know God. The text says, **everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.** Love is the act of giving without expecting anything in return. We learn the action of loving from God. **God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. While we were still in our sins, Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.** What is at the heart of God's love for us? It is His mercy. God has had every right to condemn us for our sins. We deserve only His wrath and punishment for

our disobedience. We really should have nothing more to look forward to than to hear Jesus on the Last Day say to us: **Depart from me you workers of inequity into ever lasting darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.** What a horrible way to live. If this is what loomed up before us each day, we would be miserable. There would be no light in the future. The horizon of our lives would be black. There would be only death and damnation ahead.

The excesses of this life may cloak this reality for a time; like the folks indulging themselves in revelry until the hurricane hits. Then, when the building begins to shake and the windows blow out and the building begins to come apart – then those revelers become aware of their untenable position. Ultimately a person is confronted with the truth. God's standard is perfection and we have in no way come close to living perfectly. The prodigal finally comes to his senses and crawls back to his father having nothing to offer except a life wasted and a plea for mercy.

If God would only be a vengeful God, who would not accept anything but perfection, we would all be lost. But God is merciful and His mercy is expressed in love, giving us a Savior. When we know Jesus, we know God the Father. Jesus came to reveal the loving heart of His Father. Come to me Jesus that I may know God.

These are priceless truths when doubts set in as to whether God is really a loving God. Unbelievers look at the world and quickly conclude that God is either power-less, mean, or imaginary. Indeed, the evidence seems over-whelming. How can there be a loving God in the presence of aids, sickle cell anemia, diabetes, cancer, war, divorce, rape, and child molestation?

But Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter change everything. God has in fact prepared the greatest answer possible to all human misery – He has found a way for us to receive mercy and forgiveness – for free. He sent Jesus. And through His Holy Spirit Jesus comes to us in faith and lives in us.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We plead for Jesus to come to us that we may live in love. The more we become aware of the mercy God has shown us, the more motivation we have to show mercy to other people. The Dead Sea illustrates this quite well. The water that flows into the Dead Sea does not flow out in any direction. It is unfit to drink. It is extremely salty. Nothing grows around it. The name Dead aptly describes this body of water.

In the same way, mercy needs to keep moving or it will become stagnate. If we love one another, says John, God's love is made complete, that is, we fulfill His loving purpose and continue the ever-flowing stream. Love stimulates more love. In this way hate is melted, wounds are healed, grudges are forgotten, grievances forgiven, hope shared, emptiness filled, and loneliness is eased in human hearts.

All believers in Jesus have been born again. That means that the Holy Spirit now lives within them and is generating loving thoughts, words and deeds toward other people. Every time we extend ourselves to another person in love, we are demonstrating that we have been born again. It shows that we know God. It illustrates that God lives in us. And while no one has ever seen God face to face, our expressions of love show the love of God in action in our lives. Amen