

1 John 4 v 7-21

John said "beloved, if God loved us in this way, we ought to love one another". This is the heart & soul of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's what distinguishes us as Christians. Wouldn't it be lovely if people knew that we are Christians by our love & actions, after all God's love is so amazing we must share it! God loves us & we in turn love one another, that's the essence of the Christian faith.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God, & knows God. He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love"

The source of all love is God, for God is love. It sounds so obvious, yet it isn't because somehow we may believe the source of love is within us, & that we can love separate & apart from God. Love can be as fickle as a passing whim or as enduring as life itself. Biblical love is a commitment, a caring commitment, it involves delight not just duty. It shows itself in deeds which often require self-sacrifice, seen supremely in Jesus's going to the cross.

Another take on "love" can be found in the well known bible passage 1 Corinthians 13 which begins with the words "love is patient, and is kind" but we may not actually think of love in that way, sometimes we're prone to jealousy, sometimes we boast, or are arrogant & rude. Most of us from the age of about 2 want to do things "our way"! All this is to say that there is a big difference in the love Paul describes in Corinthians & the love we experience from day to day. Humanly speaking we can't love SEPARATE & APART from God, genuine love can ONLY come FROM God. I actually find that a very comforting thought!

God is love, he is holy love, purposeful love, perfect love & redeeming love. We know this by what God does & by his actions. God did not love us just by feeling compassion towards us, or by just saying that he loved us. His love was demonstrated, he sent his most precious Son to live among us & to give himself for us. On a day in History, on a hill outside Jerusalem, the Son of God was crucified for us, what greater love could there be than this?

God doesn't reject us, he welcomes us, he doesn't punish us but forgives us, & instead of being held captive to death, we are promised eternal life.

Loving means not only that we walk in the light & follow in the steps of Christ, but that we know God, for he is the source & origin of all time love. If we are



willing to place God at the centre of our lives, God's love will fill our hearts & give us the grace to love one another, not just in part & for the moment, but fully, intimately, and for all time. Only love bears all things, believes all things, and endures all things". Only love such as this lasts forever.

God is love & he who remains in love remains in God, & God remains in him.

Amen

There are so many hymns that come to mind for today! "The king of love my shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never, I nothing lack if I am his, & he is mine forever"

I'd like to read you the words of another hymn 123

Finally a short poem called "God's Loving"

I called you into being, I fashioned you, unseen, into my likeness. I planted, deep within you, my own spirit. How then, could I not love you as you are?

What you reject despise & criticise in others, reflects what you deny about yourself, fearing that even I cannot accept it.

I do not seek perfection- but a willingness to grow, to share my love, to be a clear reflection, an image of my presence. Go now-and be my window for the world.

Hymn 519 Love Divine all loves excelling