

## 1 John 4:7-11 God is love! Easter 6 / Mother's Day May 10, 2015

By Pastor Kenneth Mellon, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Pleasant Valley Rd., West Bend, WI

Grace and peace are yours from your loving God and Father through your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

God's Word about our source of love is written in 1 John 4: 1-11

These are Your words heavenly Father, to better understand Your love and reflect Your love. Your Word...

Dear Friends, in Christ who loved us,

On any day of the year it is nice to have someone say to us: "I love you!" The words: "I love you" make us feel good! We feel valued and it can change our lives. It is one of the greatest things a parent can tell a child or a child a parent. So on this Mother's Day it is fitting for children to say "I love you" to mothers and to show that love with words and actions. Today we'll going to talk about love, but not just any love. We'll see from John the source of true love: God. He leads us ways in life that reflect His love. For:

### God is love!

**First, too many people misunderstand God's love.** They think that God's love means that they can believe and do whatever they want to do and God will simply accept it. Does that work with parents? If children think that they can do whatever they want to, no matter how harmful, would parents consider it loving to let them harm themselves? No! Some people believe that God is not involved with what is going on in the world since there is so much evil. They think that God is either weak or doesn't care about people. But, again, there are times when parents let their children experience tough times, not because they don't love them, but because they know sometimes it's the only way children can learn a life lesson.

Others feel detached from God's love. They don't know God well enough to understand how He was willing to show His love by sending His Son to make the ultimate sacrifice for them. How sad that so many people will not take the time to listen to God's Word, but they continue to see no lasting value in Christ or in God's love for them. Their love does not overcome evil. Others think that God does not care about the truth. They have made up their own set of rules about life and death. These days too often the lives of innocent children or elderly are the ones harmed while guilty people suffer little consequence. And we wonder why our world is so crazy? It is because people have redefined God in the own way and what it means that God loves them.

But in love, God wants all people to know the truth. That why He warned through John, "*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.*" (v. 1-3) There were false teachers at John's time who did not believe that Jesus was God. They taught that God filled Him for a short time and then left Him before His death, so that the blood of Jesus was not of God's Son and did not cleanse anyone of sin.

False ideas are still being taught today, leaving people without a Savior. If someone is teaching falsely against God's Word, then out of Christian love we must speak the truth and oppose it. It's no different from a parent who sees a small child playing near a busy road or sees an older child misusing the internet. They must warn the children to protect them from harm. As Christians we are not in the world to condemn others or put them down to keep them from God. We are also sinners under God's judgment and can only be saved by Christ. But, people don't know the whole love of God without God's Word. So, we speak the truth of Christ in love to help others believe and be saved!

**Second, we also reflect the love of God in life.** John wrote, *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.”* (v.7) God’s love is not something that comes to us naturally. At times non-Christians show compassion. Right now, all kinds of people are giving to help earthquake victims in Nepal. They are helping as they would want others to help them. But, God’s love is greater than that. His love is based on helping people who we are *“objects of His wrath.”* (Ephesians 2:3) People by nature live in rebellion against the true God. And, every sin that people commit adds to the judgment against them. Imagine if each of our sins was a building block, and that over our lifetimes we are stacking millions of sins that separate us from God. Without God’s intervention, all those sins would come crashing down on us in judgment at the end of our lives. But, God’s love caused Him to act in order to save us.

God’s love is so different from the world’s. If an earthquake had devastated an Isis-controlled region affecting many of their families, who of us would we be willing to send aid to people sworn to kill us! But, God *“demonstrated His love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)* John wrote, *“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent His only begotten 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.”* (v.9-10) God’s Son as one of us showed perfect love toward God and all people. In love, He gave up His life on the cross to atone for all sins. God’s justice demanded payment to turn away His anger. Jesus made the full payment by his death to change God’s anger toward us to love! Through Christ, we are God’s people. He is committed to us in love. He will never fail us despite our failings. When God says, “I love you” He means it for eternity! This is the great value He place on us!

As believers in Christ, we know the grace of God. He owed us nothing, while we owe Him all! God saved us not because we were lovable but because God is love and in love sent His Son for us. No believer who trusts in Christ’s sacrifice of love can return to a life of only self-love. The love of Christ motivates and empowers us to love others as a way to reflect His love. Jesus said, *“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:35)

We have received God’s overflowing love by faith. If we were thirsty but short on water, it would be difficult to share water with someone else. But, if we have a constant supply of water, it’s easy to share! So, we have Christ’s love and forgiveness. With His love, we can’t help be share it! The opposite is also true. If we stop showing God’s love to others, we are forgetting the value of God’s love and endangering our own lives from receiving His love by faith.

So, whether it’s Mother’s Day or any day, the need to hear the words, “I love you” remains near the top of all people’s lists. It can bring the greatest joy to hearts or without it, can leave people heart - broken. God has clearly told us He loves us through His own Son who died for us. We cannot repay God for His love. But, we can love others as a way to thank Him. We’ve heard the phrase “pay it forward.” Someone does something nice for you without you having a chance to repay them. So instead you find an opportunity to do something kind toward someone else. John wrote, *“Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* (v.11) Show God’s love today in word or action! Make a difference in love for people’s lives.