

# "The Source of All Love"

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I John 4:7 - 12  
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We're starting a series of sermons this morning, entitled, "*Love, Sweet, Love.*" Over the next four weeks we're going to look at the great love passages found in the Bible. We begin this morning with the probably the greatest of them all, I John 4.

John, the Disciple was known as the "*Apostle of Love.*" Wouldn't that be a cool title to have? It sounds like the name of a great soul singer, doesn't it? "And now ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to the stage right now, 'The Apostle of Love!'" John was one of the original 12 disciples. He was part of what's called the "*Inner Circle,*" comprised of Peter, James and John. These three seemed to be Jesus closest friends. They spent more time with Christ, and some of those times were quite significant, such as the Transfiguration. John was the only one of the disciples who was not martyred, the only one to live to old age. He became somewhat of a celebrity within the early church. It was said that John in his old age was often carried into churches just so people could see him. And he would address them with one simple sentence: "*Little Children, love one another.*" Fitting words from the Apostle of Love.

One other note: one of the commentaries points out that this passage was quite forceful in the original Greek. It starts out, "Beloved, let us love one another." The word for "Beloved" is "*agapetoi.*" (Agape=Love) The word for "Let us love" is "*agapomen.*" So it makes the point right away - those who are loved (Agapetoi) must share the love (Agapomen).

*"Agapetoi, Agapomen!" "Agapetoi, Agapomen!"*

Let's take a look at: **I John 4:7-12**

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

One commentator (Robert Law) calls this passage, *"the summit of all revelation."* Another (Paul Hoon) wrote that it's, *"the highest conception of the divine nature"* that human beings have ever put to words God is love. God's innermost being is pure, unadulterated love. Love is the very nature of God. Love is the very DNA of God.

That is "the highest conception of the divine nature" that's ever been articulated. God is love And therefore it just flows naturally and logically that if we're united to this God then love will be produced within us - because the God we're united to is love. If  $A = B$  and  $B = C$ , then  $A = C$ . If love is the very nature of God and if God's very being is pulsating through us through the Holy Spirit, then love must be the bi-product that's produced within us. That's what he's saying. *"Love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."* In fact, this connection is so strong that if one doesn't love, one does know God. Think of it this way.

If you met two people on the street and one of them points to the other person and says, "This is my best friend. This is my best friend in the whole world!" You'd say, "O that's great." But wouldn't you think it

strange if the person said, "There's only one problem in our relationship - we don't speak the same language" - wouldn't you think that was weird. How could you be best friends with someone if you can't ever speak the same language? How can you have much of a connection, how can the bond be very strong or the emotional intimacy be very deep, if you can't speak the other person's language.

Well, *love is the language of God*. And if we can't love then we'll never know what God is like - because God is love. And it's our job to speak God's language. And as we learn to speak God's language we get to know God along the way.

St. John is almost Zen-like in his thinking. He teaches us that God and love have a unique relationship - the more you get of one, the more you get of the other. It's symbiotic - they feed each other. The more of God you have, the more love you'll produce - *"for love is of God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."* The more of God you have, the more love you'll produce, and the converse is true, too - the more love you're producing, the more of God that is in you! *"Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."* We learn the ways of God by loving.

When my sons were born I read a lot of the books on parenting boys and the relationship between fathers and sons. And one of the things I read was that if a boy loses his father when he's young he will often grow up to be just like that father, so he can get to know him. The boy gets to know the father he lost in childhood by imitating him as an adult as best he can. By becoming like this father he finally gets to know his father.

The same is true for God. We learn to know God by loving one another. *"Love comes from God, Love leads to God"* (William Barclay). By imitating our God of love we come to know this God.

And *"know"* in the Bible is a very intimate word, isn't it? "And Joseph knew her not, until she gave birth to his first born child." "Know" is the biblical word for physical intimacy. *"Everyone who loves is born of*

*God and knows God.*" He's actually saying, "Everyone who loves is born of God and is intimate in the ways of God." We're are on intimate terms with God when we love. William Barclay says,

*"We are never nearer to God than when we love."*

The Early Church Father, Clement of Alexandria said that the goal of the Christian is to *"practice being God."* Since the very nature of God is to love, then it flows naturally that it's our job to practice being God by sharin' the love! And as we do we become closer and closer to God.

Well, that's the essential truth of I John 4 - *"the summit of all revelation,"* probably the greatest, most important thing said about God in all the Bible - God is love. We come to know this God through prayer. We learn of this God quite clearly in our Scriptures. We experience this God through the Sacraments, such as the one we're about to share. But St. John teaches us that we come to know this God best when we love – because love is of God.

Let me close with this little story. You may have heard it. On a bitterly cold day in a western city, a small boy stood shivering on a steel grate in the sidewalk. He was very poorly dressed and obviously a child of the street. A well-dressed woman came walking down the street, and she noticed the boy and began to talk to him. Sensing his need, she took him to a clothing store and had him completely outfitted suitable for the weather - a winter coat, a stocking cap, scarf, and gloves. The boy was so grateful he couldn't thank her enough. As they parted he turned back to ask, "Are you God's mother?" Surprised, the woman replied, "Oh, no! I'm just a child of God." The grateful boy then said, "I knew you were related."

*"Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God . . . for God is love."*

Thanks be to God.

Let's pray:

*God of Love, fill us with your Spirit, that you might live in us more fully and love through us more deeply. Day by Day. Amen.*