

This Is How We Know: Love
March 18, 2018
Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

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. (1 John 4:7-12 NIV)

What does it mean that God is love? How can we know this is true and how does God show us that He is the very definition of love? We have to assume it is no accident that John refers to God and love a combined total of 23 times in the verses above. Love is synonymous with the name of God because that is the core of who He is. You might have heard the story of a young student named Albert Einstein who challenged a professor who stated that if evil exists, and God created everything, then God created evil. Albert made the point that in the same way as there is no such thing as coldness (absence of heat) or darkness (absence of light), evil is simply what we call the absence of God, or love.

The truth of God's character is quite clearly reflected in His greatest commandment for us: to love Him and to love one another. There's that word again. Love. God calls us to be the love in a world that He created for us. This week we will talk about how we know God is love, what we are called to do with this knowledge, and how to get on with it already!

Digging Deeper

God IS love.

This is how we know.

- Love began with God when He created the world and us. Without Him, there would be no love in the world because it came from Him. God's primary nature is to love as He proved to us through His Son Jesus Christ. How do you demonstrate the love you feel for others? Jesus demonstrated love through His sacrificial death on the Cross. "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:3) Doesn't it blow your mind to think of how extravagantly Jesus must love us to do such a thing? How does it make you feel to see sacrificial love at work in people's lives? Do you sense God calling you to act in a similar way when you see or hear of it happening for others? As we have said before, love should be more than a feeling, it must be put into motion. When our hearts begin to lead our feet to move, that is how we will know God's love is at work in us.

This is what we need to do when we know.

- As we have talked about in previous weeks, life is all about right relationships – with each other, with God and with ourselves. So how do we go about applying the knowledge that God not only loves us, but that He is, was and always shall be our example of how to love each other? What advice would you give someone who says they feel lonely or struggle with forming deep relationships? Do you have these issues? How can a true understanding of God's desire for us to

live in loving fellowship with each other help us to overcome the urge to retreat and shut off from deeper connections?

How do we go about all of this?

- If we are living in full surrender and obedience to Jesus Christ, our natural inclination becomes the pursuit of a Christ-like existence. According to Wikipedia, the definition of Christian perfection is: “the name given to various teachings within Christianity that describe the process of achieving spiritual maturity or perfection. The ultimate goal of this process is union with God characterized by pure love of God and other people as well as personal holiness or sanctification.” So if our main Christian objective is to one day be united with God’s love in such a complete way that it seeps out of us into our interactions with everyone else, we cannot settle for a life filled with surface level (or non-existent) relationships. What can you do to start building a life path that leads you toward Christian perfection or perfect love? Here are a few ideas you might consider trying that could help you begin to form more meaningful relationships: find an accountability partner, join a small group, serve alongside fellow church members in the community, mentor a child, become involved in a prayer group or Bible study class, just to name a few. If you feel untethered in some way from the kind of lifestyle God wants for you, what is one thing you will do differently this week to become more integrated in relationship with others? If you want to find out how to connect in any of these ways at Lynn Haven UMC, contact Mindy Clemons at mindy@mylhumc.net.

Conclusion

The greatest of all things is not money, power or fame. We can’t take any of that with us when we die and who would you share it with here on earth if you are all alone? We must consider the ability to love and be loved to be the greatest blessing of our lives. To quote Mother Teresa: “Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is the love of Jesus.” Is love your vocation too?