

## Giving Love To Get Love

1 John 4:7-21

Turn in your Bibles to 1 John 4:7-21

A visitor went to a small zoo one day and arriving at the lion cage, exclaimed, "That's incredible, having a lion and monkey in the same cage." "How do they get along?" "Okay, usually," answered the zookeeper. "Occasionally they have a disagreement, and we have to get a new monkey." Now, why do they need to get a new monkey? Because things go along for awhile until the lion started acting like a lion. And as long as the lions act like lions the zookeepers will always need new monkeys.

Hold that thought!

James 2:8 tells us *"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right."*

The Apostle John in 1 John 3:11 wrote: *"This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another."*

Paul, in Romans 13:8 declared: *"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law."* Peter, in 1 Peter 1:22 told us: *"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."* And, of course Jesus said: *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."* John 15:9-12

Does anybody sense a pattern here? What pattern?

The commandment of the kingdom, the royal law, the proclamation of the King of kings & Lord of lords is: Love one another. God lays a heavy emphasis on "loving one another." ... Why say it so often throughout the New Testament? Why not just say it once... and then move on? Because you and I don't come by this naturally. We don't know how to love as we should (reread 1 John 4:7-10).

God's kind of love doesn't come naturally to us. Many of us either lived a selfish unloving lifestyle, or it was just beneath the surface.

For example, I think of myself as a pretty nice guy. I'm easy going, easy to get along with, give you the shirt off my back, I'll give you my time EXCEPT, my early morning time between 5 - 6 am. I enjoy that hour early in the morning when no one is around, no phone is ringing, no one is asking me to help with something - it's my time that I can do whatever I want - I'm usually working on my message for Sunday - but I enjoy it. My wife discovered that I am not a happy camper if she happens to wake up early and call me or come downstairs and start talking. I don't yell and scream, but I become irritable and it ruins my whole morning. Why would I be that way? Because, just beneath the surface - I'm as selfish as the next guy.

Colossians 3:1-10 goes thru a litany of sinful behaviors: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy

language from your lips and then says "You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived." (Colossians 3:7). That's how we used to be. That's how we used to live.

And if we don't grab hold of God's decree "Love One Another" there will be times we'll revert to our old nature, like the lion in the zoo. As long as the "lion" in us lives... there will always need to be more monkeys. There will always be "chew them up and spit them out" times when we're not very nice.

Do you have any of those days?

Example: When that happens we can become like the little girl who had spent the whole day fighting with her sister. That evening they prepared for bed, still mad at each other. As usual, they knelt beside their beds for their prayers. "Dear God," the 8 yr. old began, "Bless Daddy and Mommy, bless our cat and dog." Then she stopped. Her mother gently prodded, "Didn't you forget somebody?" She glared across the bed at her 6 yr. old sister and added, "And, oh yes, God bless my ex-sister."

That's like us when we forget to "love one another." And so God repeats it over, and over, and over again. EVEN stressing that if we can't forgive a brother his sins against us... He won't forgive us our sins. It is not optional for us. So, if it's that critical... why do Christians have trouble doing it?

Why do we have such difficulty "loving one another." One of the reasons, I believe, is because, as Christians, we start out with the habit of receiving – not giving love (I John 4:10/19). We didn't become Christians because we gave God our love. We became Christians because He 1st loved us.

Verse 10 says, *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for sin."*

Verse 19 also says, *"We love because he first loved us."*

We received His love. THEN, from the beginning of a person's decision for Christ, the Church tends to do everything for the new believer.

1. We hug them and welcome them - they are the center of attention.
2. We teach them
3. We baptize them
4. Counsel them
5. We pray with them
6. We encourage them

New believers receive and receive, and receive until it becomes the natural order for them - for us. We begin to think that this is the way it ought to be. Therein lays the makings of a trap for some.

We begin to think of the love we've received from others in church as a RIGHT. Then we begin

to convolute or distort Jesus' statement: "Love one another as I have loved you..." to say: "Love one another as they love you back." And IF they don't LOVE YOU BACK – all bets are off. But that's not what the Bible says.

I John 4:16-17 declares: *"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him."*

#### ILLUS:

There once was a carpenter who didn't overcharge for doing finishing work  
Once there was a physician who healed the sick for free  
Once there was a man who fed people at no charge...  
And you know what they did to Him?  
They crucified Him!

Folks, there will be times as a Christian that you'll feel unappreciated, and taken for granted. You'll not feel loved as you should be. When that happens you should love others anyway. WHY? Because Jesus said: "Love one another as I have loved you"

At times you're not going to be the receiver of love like you'd like to be. BUT, God didn't call you to receive love from one another (it's not in scripture anywhere). God called you to GIVE love to one another.

The principle God wants us to visualize for ourselves is one of "giving ourselves away." Because, that's the job of a servant... to give and not receive.

By His power we can give ourselves away again and again and again. And we won't fear the outcome. We won't even feel slighted when we don't get the same treatment in return. Servants, remember, don't "keep score."

A story is told of a little boy named Chad who was a shy, and quiet little guy. One day he came home and told his mother, he'd like to make a valentine for everyone in his class. Her heart sank. She thought, "I wish he wouldn't do that!" because she had watched the children when they walked home from school. Her Chad was always behind them. They laughed and hung on to each other and talked to each other. But Chad was never included.

Nevertheless, she decided she would go along with her son. So she purchased the paper and glue and crayons. For three whole weeks, night after night, Chad painstakingly made thirty-five valentines.

Valentine's Day dawned, and Chad was beside himself with excitement! He carefully stacked his valentines up, put them in a bag, and bolted out the door. His mom decided to bake him his favorite cookies and serve them up warm and nice with a cold glass of milk when he came home from school. She just knew he would be disappointed -- maybe that would ease the pain a little. It hurt her to think that he wouldn't get many valentines -- maybe none at all.

That afternoon she had the cookies and milk on the table. Then she heard the children outside & she looked out the window. Sure enough here they came, laughing and having the best time. And, as always, there was Chad in the rear. He walked a little faster than usual. She fully expected him to burst into tears as soon as he got inside. She noticed right away - his arms were empty, and when the door opened she choked back the tears. "Mommy has some warm cookies and milk for you." But he hardly heard her words. He just marched right on by, his face aglow, and all he could say was: "Not a one -- not a one." Her heart sank. And then he added, "I didn't forget a one, not a single one!"

Folks, THAT'S THE KIND OF HEART WE NEED: The heart of the servant who has determined that in this world we will be like HIM - that we will give, and give and give - unconditionally.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 says this:

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."*

I would like us to close this morning by praying a Valentine's Day prayer together.

Lord,

**Because love is patient...** Help me to be slow to judge, but quick to listen. Hesitant to criticize, but eager to encourage, remembering your endless patience with me.

**Because love is kind...** Help my words to be gentle and my actions to be thoughtful. Remind me to smile and to say "Please" and "Thank You" because those little things still mean so much.

**Because love does not envy or boast, and it is not proud...** Help me have a heart that is humble and sees the good in others. May I celebrate and appreciate all that I have and all that I am, as well as doing the same for those around me.

**Because love is not rude or self-seeking...** Help me to speak words that are easy on the ear and on the heart. When I'm tempted to get wrapped up in my own little world, remind me there's a great big world out there full of needs and hurts.

**Because love is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs...** Help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. When I want to hold onto a grudge, gently help me release it so I can reach out with a hand of love instead.

**Because love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth...** Help me stand up for what is right and good. May I defend the defenseless, and help the helpless. Show me how I can make a difference.

**Because love always protects and always trusts...** Help me to be a refuge for those around me. When the world outside is harsh and cold, may my heart be a place of acceptance and warmth.

**Finally, because love always perseveres...** Help my heart continually beat with love for You and others. Thank you for this day when we celebrate love, and for showing us what that word really means. Amen.