

john 15:4
A b i d e in **ME**



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

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Sermon Series: *The Real Thing*
God is Love
1 John 4:7-11

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

The Godhead 2 Corinthians 13:14

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Loving Intolerance of God¹
By Melissa Kreuger

Tolerance. The modern, cultural elite praise this virtue in every school setting, media outlet, and job training workshop. There seems to be no truer way to love another person than to fully accept everything about them. Christians have often joined the tidal wave of this mainstream value and often long to be known for their acceptance of others' opinions and lifestyles. On the surface it seems to be a positive virtue, one that exemplifies the life of the Christian.

But have you ever considered that tolerance is never encouraged in the Bible? The fruit of the Spirit includes love and kindness, but missing from the list is tolerance. In fact, Christians aren't called to tolerance, because we serve an intolerant God.

Just consider a few stories from the Old Testament:

The Garden: God didn't tolerate Adam and Eve's sin. He didn't accept their lifestyle choice to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He banished them from Eden and left an angel with flaming swords to guard the entrance so they couldn't return.

Noah and the Flood: While the sanitized version of this story is pleasantly detailed in children's storybooks, we cannot forget this story is about immense judgment. Picture a tsunami of destruction instead of a nursery filled with smiling stuffed animals. The flood involved terror, suffering, and death. It was a catastrophic event that only one family survived.

Uzzah: One of the most uncomfortable accounts of divine intolerance is found in 2 Samuel 6. This story recounts Uzzah's attempt to steady the ark of the LORD after an oxen stumbled on the journey back to Israel. When he reached out and touched the ark (an expressly forbidden action), God didn't say, "Well, his heart was in the right place. I know he was just trying to help." Uzzah's instinctive response was met with God's intense anger, and Uzzah was immediately struck down.

We could go on and on throughout the Old Testament, considering Achan, Korah, Aaron's sons, the Canaanites, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, just to name a few. All perished by the very hand of God. He did not tolerate their sin; he punished it.

Greater Judgment

Lest we somehow think Jesus represents a different God than the one of the Old Testament, though, consider his teaching to the disciples in Matthew 10:14-15: "And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the Day of Judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town."

Jesus claims a *greater* judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah for those who reject the message of the gospel. He warned many would believe they knew him, only to learn they have been rejected with these words: “Depart from me, all you workers of evil!” (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 13:22-27) Rather than find welcome into God’s kingdom, they would find themselves in a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Both the Old and New Testaments display a God who doesn’t tolerate sin. Yet there is one story in Scripture that demonstrates most clearly the intolerance of God. It is the story of the cross. Take a fresh look at the terrifying and uncomfortable reality of the cross. Here is an innocent man—whipped, beaten, nailed to a tree, bearing the sins of the world. For you. For me. Is this the picture of a tolerant God who ignores evil? No, this is a gruesome picture of divine wrath and judgment. The story makes no sense if God is a tolerant God.

The cross demonstrates God’s character in all its complexity. It shows his love, kindness, and mercy united with his justice, holiness, and wrath. It perfectly demonstrates a God who surpasses understanding. The Lord is giving us a glimpse into the immensity of his love for us. The love of God is not a tolerant love. It is much better. It is a redemptive love.

Tolerance Is Unloving

Sin must be paid for. To tolerate evil is to deny justice. God unleashes his full wrath on evil because he’s good. If good tolerated evil, it would cease to be good. Refusal to tolerate sin, then, is an essential part of loving others well. It might be tolerant for a mother to let her children play in a busy street or run with scissors, but it’s not loving in the least.

We also should hate sin because it’s harmful, even if we don’t always understand the harm that may be caused. As a child is unaware that a car may quickly appear, we must understand that we’re unaware of all the dangers of sin. God, our loving Creator who understands our frame more fully than we do, bids us to flee from evil and find abundant life in him alone. Life outside the revealed will of God doesn’t ultimately fulfill; it leads to misery and emptiness.

As his people, then, how should we live? Romans 12 provides helpful insight:

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection.... Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

God calls us to abhor evil, while at the same time warning us against being agents of his wrath. We should hate the act of stealing while showing mercy and compassion to one who steals. Loving people well doesn’t mean we must embrace the choices they make. It means we openly welcome and embrace all who come into our lives with a heart of understanding and the message and hope of the gospel. We love people well when we call them out of sin into relationship with King Jesus. It may not be the world’s definition of tolerance, but it’s the truest way to love.

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STEP ONE . . .

OBSERVATION

What does the text say?

1 John 4:7-11

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- Number the occurrences of **love** in all of its forms.
- Circle both occurrences of **beloved**.
- Write in the left margin of verse 7: 1) *Born of God*; 2) *Knows God*.
- Draw a double circle around the statement: **God is love**.
- Put a box around **for** in verse 7, **because** in verse 8, **but** in verse 10, and **so** in verse 11.
- In the right margin of verse 9, write the meaning of the word **manifest** (see commentary below).
- Underline the phrase: **sent His only Son into the world** and **sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins**.
- Write in the right margin of verse 10 what the word **propitiation** means. (See commentary below).
- Double underline: **so that we might live through him** and **we also ought to love one another**.

STEP TWO . . .

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

What does the text mean?

The commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

⁷ **Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God.** **Beloved** [*agapetoī*] is a term of tenderness (dearly loved one; as with Jesus the beloved of the Father) as well as transition. The previous paragraph (verses 1-6) was pointed and directed. The transition from the command to test the spirits to the warmth of God's love turns on this special term of address of his friends. The word **love** [*agape*] dominates 1 John 4:7-5:3. In verse 7, love is used as in the form of an exhortation. In verse 11, it is expressed as a personal duty/responsibility. **Us** is plural. **One another** [*allelous*] is reciprocal. John is primarily talking about how Christians behave toward one another. He is concerned with love in action and not just love in the abstract. **Love is from God**. The use of the definite article with love (lit. *the* love is from God) centers on the kind of love John was stressing—the love that has its source in God (Hiebert). It flows from or out of God. He is the spring and source of love.

And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Two things can be inferred from the way Christians love one another: (1) They are born of God; (2) They know God. **Born of God** [*gegnnetai*]: This is expressed in the perfect tense which includes not only the concept of the new birth, but also its continuing effects. Everyone who **loves** with God's love gives proof of their new birth. We cannot love one another all the time in our own strength. Our ability to love flows from our new birth. **Knows God**: Stated in the present tense which indicates that loving Christians are always growing in their love and knowledge.

⁸ **Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.** This is the negative alternative of the positive affirmation of verse 7. The logic is clear: where there is no love and no knowledge of God there is the absence of the new birth. Why? Because **God is love**. God's character corresponds to love. Love does not define God, but God defines love.

⁹ **In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.** This declares what a loving God has done in words that are reminiscent of John 3:16. **Manifest** means to be made evident and clear. It should not read **among us** or **in us**, but toward us (Vincent). **Sent** [*apestalke*]: implies the preexistence of the Son sent on a mission from the Father. The perfect active indicative of **sent** stresses the continuing results of Jesus being sent.

Only [*monogenes*]: Occurs nine times in the NT. Only John uses this term which is variously translated "One and only" (NIV) or "only begotten" (KJV). It speaks of Jesus' deity and complete uniqueness. **World**: the earthly realm. **So that we might live** [*zoa*] **through him**: This life is both spiritual and eternal and it starts now. There is a difference between existing and living.

¹⁰ **In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.** **In this is love** looks forward to what follows and specifically, how love is demonstrated. **Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us**: the initiative was with God and not with us. He loved us before we loved Him or could have loved Him. **Propitiation** [*hilasmon*]: Or satisfaction. Used four times in the NT and always in the context of Jesus' death (cf. also Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2). The word means to turn away the wrath of God by means of an offering. God's holiness required satisfaction. God's love met His own requirement.

¹¹ **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** The **ought** is emphatic. It is expressed by working out what God so ably works in us. "John always proceeds from faith to love for one's neighbor, and from here he returns to faith and demonstrates it on the basis of this fruit" (Luther).

Complementary Passage

Luke 15

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable: ⁴"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

¹¹And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' ³¹And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

STEP THREE . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

Questions

1. Read 1 John 4:7-11 in the *Amplified Version*:

⁷Beloved, let us [unselfishly] love *and* seek the best for one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves [others] is born of God and knows God [through personal experience].

⁸The one who does not love has not become acquainted with God [does not and never did know Him], for God is love. [He is the originator of love, and it is an enduring attribute of His nature.] ⁹By this the love of God was displayed in us, in that God has sent His [One and] only begotten Son [the One who is truly unique, the only One of His kind] into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [that is, the atoning sacrifice, and the satisfying offering] for our sins [fulfilling God's requirement for justice against sin and placating His wrath].

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us [in this incredible way], we also ought to love one another.

2. Summarize in your own words what John is saying in this passage.

3. What does John mean when he declares, "God is love?"

4. In your own words, what does it mean to know God?

5. Have you ever doubted God's love for you? How does 1 John 4:9 encourage us during times of doubt?

6. How does John describe the way God loves in verses 10-11? How does this description help you understand how you can show love to others?

7. John refers to Jesus as God's only Son (*monogenes*; see the commentary on this word). What is unique about Jesus? How is His uniqueness important to understanding the love of God?

8. How does John's description of love in this entire paragraph differ from the world's view of love?

9. Explain the contrast in verse 10.

10. Where do we find the motivation and ability to love one another? How does this answer alter or effect how you go about loving others?

11. Describe how believers ought to love one another in 11? How will this practically be expressed in your life, Growth Group, and Loudonville Community Church?

STEP FOUR . . .

REFLECTION

Regarding the Theme

The Love of God

Lyrics by Frederick Lehman, 1917

*The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.*

Refrain:

*Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
The saints' and angels' song.*

*When hoary time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—
The saints' and angels' song.*

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

A Bible Reading Plan for 2019

(on LCC website)

Sunday, March 17 thru Saturday, March 23, 2019
Judges 13-15; Judges 16-18; Judges 19-21; Ruth 1-4;
1 Samuel 1-4; 1 Samuel 5-7; 1 Samuel 8-10

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

Memory Verse

~1 John 4:8~

"Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."