

## WHAT KIND OF LOVE IS THIS?

All Saints Day (Observed)

04 November Anno Domini 2012

Rev. Steven D. Spencer – Pastor Messiah Lutheran Church

### 1 JOHN 3:1–3

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord who is the Savior, Jesus the Christ, Amen!

Our text for today is from St. John's 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle chapter 3 verse 1. ***“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are”***. So far the text!

#### I. SAINT JOHN

St. John was referred to as “The beloved of the Lord.” He was the only disciple present at the Lord's crucifixion. He and Mary, Jesus mother, stood at the very foot of the cross. Jesus from the cross said to His mother, ***“Woman, behold, your son!”*** of course meaning John. And to John He said, ***“Behold, your mother!”*** (John 19:26-27). John was to provide for Mary and take care of her even as his own mother. Jesus' love was evident for His mother from the cross. It is recorded that John and Mary moved to Ephesus, she lived in his household as a member of his family. John came from an affluent lineage. He had free access to the Temple in Jerusalem no doubt a relative of one of the powerful Sanhedrin. But John forsook his heritage and wealth to follow Jesus. By the way, John was the only disciple, according to history (excluding Judas), that was never martyred. It is said that he died of old age. He wrote the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John and most likely the Book of Revelation.

John knew who Jesus was. He wrote in his gospel, John 1:1: ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*** And verse 14 ***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”***. Jesus is God made flesh. John knew that. John understands this great love of God. In John 3:16 he records: ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*** Other than John only St. Paul comes close in 1 Corinthians 13 to capture this love of God that John seems to express so easily. Listen to what John writes in 1<sup>st</sup> John chapter 4: ***“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love”*** (1 John 4:7-8).

#### II. WHAT KIND OF LOVE

***“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are”*** (1 John 3:1). What kind of love? The New Testament talks about four kinds of love.

1) **Ἔρως** The first one is eros. Eros is that physical, sensuous kind of love between a man and

woman. It means desire. It is from that Greek word we get the word erotic. And it's only condoned in Scripture within the bonds of marriage.

2) φιλεω The second one is Phileo. This love is a love of the affection. It delights in being in the presence of another. The city of Philadelphia gets its name from this type of love. Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love. Phileo is the type of love for a friend or neighbor. It is the root of hospitality!

3) στοργη The third kind of love is storge. This is the type love that mother and father have for children, or a grandparent for a grandchild. This is the blood is thicker than water type love. Scripture, by the way, never directly mentions this type of love. It's so natural, so every day, so ever present it's taken for granted. Moms and dads love their kids. And so occasionally Scripture will use the term astorge, "without natural affection" to denote the wickedness that exist when this love is missing. Listen to what St. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:2-4 **"People will be lovers (Phileo) of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parent (astorge), ungrateful, unholy, without love (astorge), unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good (aphileo), treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers (Phileo – friends) of God—** Do you see how this lack of familial love is connected to sin? When love isn't present, sin abounds. If you see such behavior in loved ones it might be good to ask yourself, "Has there been a breakdown in family affection and love?" When family love is rejected it is often a sign of worldly love or corruption.

4) Ἀγάπη Agape is the purest form of love. It's God's kind of love. Agape is unconditional love. It is concerned with what is best for the recipient. It doesn't require anything in return. All the other types of love look for something in return. If you say I love you (storge love) to a child or spouse or loved one, you expect them to say "I love you too." Not just dittos or me too. If you say, how are you to a neighbor (phileo love) you might expect them to say, fine and how are you? If you embrace someone passionately or kiss them (eros love) you might expect them to embrace or kiss back, not just stand like a dead tree trunk. But agape expects nothing in return. It is unidirectional. It is not based on feelings but on a decision to do what is best for another. You can agape someone even if you really don't like them. I love you but I don't like you. Sometimes parents need to choose agape over storge just to survive a child's ill manners.

Back to our text with the proper understanding of agape. **"See what kind of love (agape) the Father has given to us,"** This text can be properly understood as **"See what kind of unconditional love, that expects absolutely nothing from us, the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are".** John seems so overjoyed by this knowledge of God's love that he repeats it time and again in his writings. And it's no wonder. For John truly grasp the gift of love given by God. In the very beginning of John's Epistle he writes these words; see if you recognize them. **"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (1 John 1:8-9).

To truly appreciate God's love we need to realize our own situation. We are sinners! We have sinned against God in thought, word and deed. By what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved God with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We rightly deserve God's temporal and eternal punishment. John understands the grace and mercy of God because he understands his own sinful nature.

### III. GOD'S CURE FOR OUR SIN

That's why Jesus came. Jesus the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, stepped down from His throne of Glory in heaven and humbled Himself by becoming a man. He put on our humanity to save

us from ourselves. *He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, FOR US! He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. And He did it all FOR US! And in heaven Jesus has returned to His throne of Glory and still intercedes for us today. The incredible love God has for us. **“For if while we were enemies of God, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”** (Romans 5:10). That’s Agape love!*

Through the cross of Jesus, God says I love you! Through the blood of Jesus, God says I forgive you and you are mine no greater expression than love can I give you. John writes it this way: **“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13). Jesus gave His life for yours. He paid the price for your sin. He credited you with His righteousness. You are His friends.

In the Book of Revelation John wonders about all those in heaven and from where they came from. The elder in heaven explains: **“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** Those in heaven are the ones that have fought the good fight, run the good race and made it through the tribulation. Their robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb. They are His saints. By the way, you are His saints as well. You too wear the robes they do. Robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, given to you at baptism. For you are robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, paid for in His blood. Unlike them we still live in the midst of the great tribulation but the victory has been won for us by the Lamb of God.

The day will come when the Lord will call us to the great banquet in Heaven but until then we too shall fight the good fight, and run the good race and survive the great tribulation knowing that God is in control and that His perfect love casts out all fear. For His love calls us saints and promise us life eternal. For by love of God and the blood of Jesus Christ all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in Jesus name and for Jesus sake, amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
**AMEN!**