



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
www.mzluth.org

May 5, 2024

Pastor James Enderle
Pastor Dave Ruddat

6th Sunday of Easter

First Lesson: [Acts 9:36-42](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 98 CW

Second Lesson/ Sermon Text: [1 John 4:7-11, 19-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 15:9-17](#)

Resurrection Reality
Jesus' Business Is Love; Therefore, So Is Ours
Beloved, Let Us Love

1. God is _____; shown in _____
2. Love known by _____ our _____
3. Shown by _____ as God _____
 - a. In the _____
 - b. In the _____

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

A phrase that is thrown around a lot in our world today which I think is overused and a lot of people don't understand and actually use it and abuse it is the idea that "love is love." People talk about love is love, all types of love, it's all the same and people talk about this to push certain things, but think about that. Think about the types of love that people have and even the ways we use the word "love."

If you were to ask the kids over at grade school about what things they love, what might they say? "I love ice cream!" Or maybe you ask someone in here what they love. "I love the Packers!" There are all sorts of things that people talk about with "love." Often it can be the idea of liking something a lot. But also, our idea of what it means to love is very different than what the Bible says about what is true love.

In our section for today, John is going to write to us about what true love is, what God's love for us is, and how we can love those around us. The Biblical love is very different than the love that the world speaks about so often. The encouragement today is to

think of this: **beloved** (us/you), **let us love**. Where we think about the beloved is in the first verses of the text where it says, ***“Dear friends, let us love one another...”*** A better translation for that first part is actually “Loved ones/Beloved.” Instead of just “friends,” it is “Those who are loved, let us love.” That really sets the tone for this whole section and the idea of what we are going to talk about because we are loved. How do we know that? We see who God is. It says, ***“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from 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.

The first thing to understand about love is *God is love*. But how is that really shown? It is *shown in Jesus*. When we talk about love and think about love as an emotion or feeling, God is not just this nice thing we think about and whenever I think about love and nice things, that’s God. How does God show that He is love? He sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him. He loves us so much that He shows it to us.

We look at the different types of love that there are in the world. The Bible uses three different categories. If you have the sermon notes, they are on the back of that. The three that you hear about are the Agape, Philia and Eros. Eros is that sexual/erotic love which is a gift from God. So within marriage, that’s a good type of love, but we know it can be perverted very often. Then we have the Philia, the friendship, and how great it is to have friends and people to support you and to do things together with.

But then the love that the Bible really talks about here and the love that God is is that Agape love. What is that love and what is that real love? It is a self-sacrificing love. How is that shown? In Verse 10, it says, ***“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”*** Jesus came into the world to live for us and to die for us. Agape means self-sacrificing, to give of oneself, to think about what the other person needs.

In pre-marriage counseling we always talk about marriage and how it is this great example that every day, what do you have to choose—to serve yourself or to serve your spouse, and if you have kids, to serve them? It’s not easy. But this self-sacrificing love, to put others first, God did it by sending His only Son. Jesus did it by going to the cross, to die for you and for me. He knew the pain and the trouble and the difficulty of taking hell upon Himself, but He did it for you and for me. He was concerned for you and for me, thinking about the sins of the world so that He could be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. What does that mean for us in understanding love? We don’t really understand the love of God unless we really admit our own sins. *Love* can really only be *known by admitting our sin*.

As Lutherans, we talk about how there are two main teachings of the Bible. We talk about Law and Gospel. When it talks about Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, if I

don't really understand my sins and how sinful I am, how important is that? If I downplay what I've done or, as I was talking to another Christian (not a Lutheran) who thinks "When I become Christian, then those sins are no longer sins. They are just mistakes." If we don't call sin "sin," aren't we downplaying what Jesus really did for you and for me? He died for all of my sins. The sins that I still commit today, the sins I did before, the sins of the whole world. So we can understand how great His love is when we admit and understand how sinful we are. But that's the good news—that Gospel message that God is greater than our sins; that Jesus' love for us is so great!

Pastor Timothy Keller said this about sin and grace and knowing the depth of both. He said, "The Gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." We are so much more flawed, we are so much more sinful than we could ever imagine when we compare ourselves to the Ten Commandments, and as we are going to look here about what God asks us to do in loving. We are so sinful! Yet, we are so loved! That's the Gospel message, and we don't want to water down either of those but preach them to the full extent and to take them into your heart. When you confess and you go to God and say "Help," God lifts you up because He loves you and has forgiven you. That's what this message is all about—God's great love for you in Christ and that we might live through Him.

So as He loves us and we are to live through Him, what does He call us to do? He says, ***"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister."*** As we have this love, what do we do with it? It is then *shown by loving as God loves*. We are to love others as He has loved us. Is that easy? Not at all, right?

In this section of 1 John, John is writing to Christians and he is talking about (an important verse in here), where it says in Verse 7, ***"Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."*** He is not saying that everyone out in the world who loves other people, "They are from God and they know God," because we know lots of people have no connection to Jesus and God and they might talk about love or show love. What he is stressing here is a contrast. In this you will see that as people are struggling with relationships, he has been writing to the people that are struggling with relationships of brothers and sisters in the church, and they hate others. So he is contrasting, "If I hate my brother and sister, there is a problem." Am I going to see the love of Christ, am I understanding His great love for me, because He wants us to love others knowing that we are first loved. That's the key passage there. ***"We love because he first loved us."*** I can't love if I don't understand and see the love of God.

One of the greatest examples of this: One of my professors from MLC—if you read that Prepared to Answer book (we had Bible study on that on Sunday mornings—he is a speech, communications and works with the international students. In sermons he would always talk about your love cup. That sounds a little silly, but it makes sense. He talks about a love cup that if I don't get that love cup filled up from God, if I don't fill that up with the Gospel and the love that Christ has for me, can I pour it out for other people? If I have emptied that because I'm not in the Word and I don't see that I am forgiven and that I am loved, then I have nothing to give. God is calling us to love others, but I have to fill that up with the love that God has given me.

How does He want us to do this? He talks over and over about brothers and sisters. I think the first thing to think about is loving others *in the church*. Is it always easy to love those who are close to you? You can think about in the church or even family. I think church is a good example because we are like a family sometimes. Who are some of the people who hurt you the most? Who are the hardest to forgive? They are people that are closest to you. You say "They should know better! How could they do that thing?" It's so hard to forgive because you are close and you remember and the pain is there. Maybe they said something in front of someone else or you just don't trust them—all these different things, but it's so easy to talk about someone else behind their back and to not show the love that God wants us to show, even with those closest to us, even among those in the church.

Another pastor said this about the church, and I think this helps us think about who God has given us in the church. You can think this again about family as well. "The church is not a group of friends you picked. It's a group of brothers and sisters God has picked for you." Think about that. Often we say "I picked this church" and maybe you go because you have a friend or something there, but think about all the people that God brings together in the church. All the people here, all the people in our school community, in our church community, God has brought you together for a purpose, with different gifts and different talents. God has picked these people for you. It's a blessing. That's great! Do you want them all to be the same? If I was looking out at a crowd of people that were all clones, the same people, or even if I thought you should all be me—that would be really scary if I was looking at a crowd of all me—ew, no! God has picked out the people He wants in this church and if one isn't active, if they're not here, it's like that body of Christ, a body part that isn't functioning correctly and we limp and we hurt. They are all important and it's important for us to show that love to one another.

As we think about those in the church, we also want to think about how we can show love *in the world*. This can be just as hard. We see people who are thinking and believing things that are so different than us. Maybe you think about those people who are protesting, people who believe this or that, how can you love someone like that! They are so different and they aren't showing love. They are saying vile things and they

are disrespecting us. What are their views of Christianity? So what? It doesn't mean I have to condone what they are doing. I don't have to say that their lifestyle or how they do things is okay and good, but can I still show love?

Think of Jesus with the woman caught in adultery where He protects her, shows her uncommon love but then says "Go, leave your life of sin." But what we most often do and when we talk about the two teachings we have in the Bible, what are we so focused on with the world—the Law. Everyone knows what we are against. Don't do this. Don't do that. You must do this. And what gets lost—the Gospel. Do people know what we stand for? Do they know who Jesus is and that they are loved and forgiven, that God so loved the whole world that He gave His one and only Son, that THEY are loved by God, too? Maybe they have never heard that. So WE get the opportunity to show that love and forgiveness.

One encouragement though. As you look at this and if you are saying "I struggle to love. I struggle to forgive," or someone really hurt you and it's hard to love that person, know that you are loved and forgiven. Who has the perfect love—Christ does. Probably in this room, as we are talking about loving people in the church, our family, or outside the church, if I ask people to raise their hand of who struggles with something like this, probably everyone would say it. They could think of a situation where they are not showing love. Know that you are loved and forgiven and God wants us and encourages us to do that, but knowing Jesus did it for you perfectly. He is the one who is perfect in our place. So we understand that love and forgiveness and ask Him to be with us and to help us love when it's hard.

What He is asking us to do here is to not only love those who love us back but to love our enemies. That's hard! But that's what God did for you and me. He loves to love us. He loved us when we were still sinners and when we still sin today. Take that to heart knowing that you are so loved and you are loved, even in the midst of your struggles, so we can go out and love others and help them to see God and know of His love and forgiveness as well. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.