

## 1 John 4:7-10

### The Character of Christ Jesus the Lover

**Introduction:** If it is your first time joining us - Welcome! We have dedicated this year to Biblical Literacy; meaning we as a church are reading the Bible for ourselves to know first hand what it teaches and in order to be shaped by the story of God. And along with that we are teaching through the Bible on Sunday mornings - the main themes, message and characters. Today we are closing out a 5 week series on the Character of Christ.

We've considered Jesus the Teacher - Our Rabbi - who calls us to be his disciples - To be with him, to become like him, to do what he did.

We considered Jesus the Healer. Looking at how Jesus didn't just heal people from their sicknesses and disease, he came to do a deeper work of healing and restoration - from the destruction that sin has brought into our lives and into the world.

We looked at Jesus the savior. We saw how Jesus is the true and greater older brother who went out looking for us and gladly spent his inheritance, not just risking his life, but giving his life, in order to bring us into the incredible, generous and gracious love of the Father. Jesus is the only true Savior who came to seek and save what is lost.

We looked at Jesus the Servant. We saw how Jesus' act of foot washing is symbolic of his sacrificial death for us - we must be cleansed by Jesus.

We also saw how it is an example to us - serving, proactively going low, is to be the continual posture of God's people. We are to make ourselves the servant of all because Jesus our king made himself the servant of all.

Today we come to our last character study - The Character of Love.

#### 1. The Love of God

1. The Bible has so much to say about the Love of God - Psalm 107 calls all people, everywhere, to tell their story of how they have experienced God's great salvation and grace - as the Psalm closes it says, **"Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord."** Psalm 136 is a call and response Psalm and for 25 stanzas of proclaiming God's great works - calls for the response - **"For his love endures forever!"**

Psalm 33 and 119 tell us that **“The earth is filled with the steadfast love of the Lord.”**

2. We’ve talked about this Love of God many times. It is the Hebrew word *Hesed* and it means steadfast faithfulness - It is such a far cry from our modern definitions of love, based usually upon how we feel at a certain moment in time. Sally Lloyd-Jones in the Jesus Story Book Bible defines it as, *“God’s Never stopping, Never giving up, Un-breaking, Always and Forever love.”*
3. John the Apostle who describes himself as **“the disciple whom Jesus loved,”** tells us that, **“God is Love”** - Meaning God doesn’t just love, he isn’t just kind, or nice - Love is part of his being, person and nature, it is one of his divine attributes...
  1. Love flows from or out of God and has God as its spring or source. When you think about that it means then - that giving what is good and serving the benefit of others - is closer to the essence of God than getting and being served - God eternally lives to lavish his love upon his creation. God loves, because it is who he is. Christianity teaches that God is himself a community the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and that this community of God has existed for all eternity in a state of love, praise, and deference to each other. (the uniqueness of the this doctrine compared to other religions)..
    1. *“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.*
    2. *When years of 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.*
    3. *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.”*
2. **A Walk through the great Love of God**
  1. The whole creation story is full of God's gifts of love. Life is given to creatures. Earth is given to humanity. Woman is given to Man.

Children are given to woman. God gives humans dominion over all creation: Mountain ranges and waterfalls, deserts and jungles, leopards, glaciers, sequoias, oranges, peacocks. He gives rain. He gives light. He gets fragrances and flavors, even though, as a spiritual being himself, has neither a nose nor a tongue. He gives colors. He covers the earth with food giving plants or life-giving water. He creates orgasms and oxygen. None of these things are needed by God or deserved by his creatures, but he gives them anyway. creation is a gift of grace and love.

1. Gods gifts are unequivocally good. Creation according to Genesis 1 is good, good, good, good, good, good, and very good. The garden is a paradise work is good. Sex is good. Marriage is good.
2. Even after the Fall of humanity - the world is still filled with grace. The rainbow guarantees goodness forever; the covenant of Abraham concerns the blessing of the entire world. The Law is good, reviving the soul. The land is good, with grape clusters the size of a wine barrel. The temple is good, the joy of the whole earth. There is no Trojan horses, beautiful evils, or jars of death here, no secret misery is hidden in the small print. When God gives, it is for the blessing of everybody.
3. But none of this compares with God's inexpressible gift of his Son - what can be compared with God himself? The incarnation is the most extravagant gift in all history or literature, and the nativity story draws out this point in a variety of ways from the subtle greetings of, "**O, highly favored one, the Lord is with you!**" to the blatant, "**from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.**" God's gift of himself is the most outlandish demonstration of love that God could possibly offer.
4. Everything he gives to the crowds that follow him is good - good news, sight, speech, ritual cleansing, hearing, bread, teaching, peace, social inclusion, forgiveness, table fellowship, life - all of this is in some way a precursor to his gift of himself, of his own accord, as a ransom for many.
  1. His parables, strikingly, reinforced the picture of God as the irrepressible giver, even when they are not mainly about God. Once there was a farmer who scattered seeds so liberally that most of it didn't take root. Once there was a king who forgave a debt of 10,000 talents. Once there was a vineyard owner who gave people far more than their work was worth. Once there was

a father who gave away half his estate to his rebellious son and then gave him a feast when he came crawling back home, having wasted it all. Once there was a noble man who gave three months wages to his employees, and then went on a foreign trip. Once there was a landowner who gave his vineyard over to tenants. Once there was a king who gave wedding invitations to every undesirable in the country. In fact, it's hard to think of a parable in which a God figure features and he is not characterized by giving away far more than he should.

2. There's also a certain extravagance, verging on wastefulness to Jesus' miracles. How many weddings have you been to where they need 150 gallons of fine wine? Can a person who can miraculously multiply bread and fish also count, so as to not end up over catering by 12 baskets? If you could heal someone with a word why would you wait until they've been dead for three days before raising them, putrid grave clothes and all, in front of the whole village? What is the point of walking on water rather than swimming, or calming a storm rather than looking at the clouds and muttering something about it being better to go sailing tomorrow? Why does a death need to be accompanied not just by earthquakes, dark skies, and torn curtains but also by the coming to life from the dead for dozens of random people? Who produces 153 fish out of nowhere, to the point where your friends boats are nearly sinking? - As Psalm 107 says, **"Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord."**

### 3. The Love of Jesus

1. And yet, these miracles, generous and gracious as they are, are so eclipsed by the gift of Jesus Christ himself. Every act, every deed, every sign, every word of Jesus drips with Love - he is the love of God incarnate and all of this culminates in his life giving sacrifice for the world on the cross..
  1. Love is so associated with the career of Jesus, his life death and resurrection, that Paul refers to it as the New Law for God's people - the Law of Christ is to love others in the same self sacrificial way that Jesus has loved us... The Love of God displayed in Jesus' self sacrificial death for the world becomes the greatest display of love the world has ever known -
  2. John, the Apostle, defines love by the sacrificial life and death of Jesus - **"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from**

**God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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. 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. - 1 John 4:7-10**

3. I think sometimes we can think of the love of God in General sense - God so loved the world - That it almost becomes impersonal but that is not how the apostles and writers of the NT saw it. Yes God does love the whole world enough to give his only begotten son, Jesus loves the world enough to lay down his life for it's life. But there is a radical personableness to God's love as well -
4. John of course calls himself - the Disciple whom Jesus loved. We are told, by John, that Jesus loved Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus.
5. We are told in the Gospel of Mark that when Jesus spoke with the Rich Young Ruler that - He loved him. And yet, we know Jesus saw right through him, he knew him...And He loved him.
6. Paul In Galatians 2:20 Makes this incredible statement - **"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."**
7. This is an incredible personalizing of the loving act of Jesus - Paul says, (Looking at the cross) Jesus great act of love wasn't just general, it wasn't just that God so loved the world in a general, impersonal way, (I Just love everyone) - but that the cross is proof that Jesus himself loves me, loves you, loves Paul - and gave himself for me, for you.... It was my sin, my brokenness, my healing, my salvation that was purchased at the cross.
1. Can we say that with absolute confidence? I'm not asking if you feel that you have earned the love of Jesus - I am asking if you know that you are dearly loved by God in spite of yourself - that he loves you simply because he loves you. Do you know that; can you say that?

4. **Closing:** *“There is tremendous relief in knowing that his love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench his determination to bless me. There is, certainly, great cause for humility in the thought that He (God) sees all the twisted things about me that my fellow humans do not see, and that he sees more corruption in me than that which I see in myself. There is, however, equally great incentive to worship and love God in the thought that, for some unfathomable reason, he wants me as his friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given his Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose.... - J.I. Packer, Knowing God”*

1. *“Do you believe that the God of Jesus loves you beyond worthiness and unworthiness, beyond fidelity and infidelity - that he loves you in the morning sun and the evening rain - that he loves you when your intellect denies it, your emotions refuse it, your whole being rejects it. Do you believe that God loves without condition or reservation and loves you this moment as you are and not as you should be.” - Brennan Manning, All is Grace*

2. This is the amazing truth of God’s love displayed for us in Jesus - we are fully known and simultaneously fully loved. That combination brings a radical security - there is nothing hidden from God - he knows it all - and he loves me - This has incredible power to transform us into people who want to love God in return, to obey him, to please him and also to be like him - to love others in the same way that he loves us - May this knowledge of God’s great love for us - grow in us - as Paul said that we may be able to comprehend - what is the height, depth, width and length - to know (By experience) the love of God which surpasses knowledge...May this self sacrificial love of Jesus, grow in us - that all people will see that we are his disciples, that his life, his character is at work in us

1. **“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”** **“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than**

**this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.” - John 15:9-17**