

All You Need is Love – October 12, 2014  
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1<sup>st</sup> John 4:7-21

For many of us love is an emotion. Our culture's love-theologian, Barbara Streisand, notes that love is "*Feelings, nothing but feelings.*" The writer of the first letter of St. John tells us however, that love is God's command.

Love is beyond emotion, beyond feeling, it is not sticky sweet sentimentality spoken only to people who want to hear the words of love. The Scriptures are replete with the God's command to love. And while the concept of love is not difficult to understand it can be a real pain to put into practice.

Whether we are a baby Christian or a grandmother or grandfather in the faith, we do not become perfect in love because love is a process. The Great Commandment, to love God with all your heart and strength and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself, takes a lifetime.

Wherever we are at this moment: if we are unconcerned or angry, God asks us to love. If we are already loving we are to love more completely, more wholly. God is all about relationships and love invites us to connect more deeply with both God and our sisters and brothers. Godly love compels us into love for others.

When we love in this fashion it become the impetus for loving the world for Christ. Being in love with God, and everyone else are inter-connected, they are inseparable. When the love of God comes to live in our lives it does so forever.

Verse 16 of St. John's letter tells us the God is love. The essence of God is love. It stands to reason therefore that when you find love you will find God. And because God's love lives in us it also flows through us to our neighbors.

This love creates a different reality in our lives. It moves us beyond our hatreds, criticisms, and jealousies. When we live in love we can no longer hold a grudge or stand off from those who disagree with us, or ignore those who fail to do what we ask.

God's love in Jesus dissolves our impatience, our unresponsiveness, our ego-centrism, even our denials and disloyalties. Christ-like love changes us. We are friends of Jesus. We live in this fellowship with God and each other.

The 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of this 1<sup>st</sup> letter is persistent in reminding us that how we live the Christian life is the prime gauge of God's love in us.

Electricity has always been a mystery to me. I realize this may be a shocking statement to some of you. I flick the light switch in the parsonage and the light comes on. But the electricity, or the power, is not in the switch. It is not in the wiring, either. It is outside of the house. The switch and the wiring may be in perfect working order but if they are not connected to the power there will not be any power.

Similarly, we cannot self-generate love because it comes from God. Love is God's energy flowing through us, invisible like electricity, but seen in the way we live our lives for one another.

As we saw last Sunday, God is the vine and we are the branches. We grow in love because we are attached, connected to the vine. We can know we are 'in the vine' because we are producing fruit. God first calls us to grow in our Spiritual lives and then to share Jesus' love with the whole world. We cannot share what we do not have.

God is love. Those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. Love is not inactive. God's love for each of us is audacious. It is ferocious. It is the love of a protective parent who will do anything to protect her or his child. God's love is the love of a dear friend who is willing to lay down her life for a friend. It's a sibling's love who is able to forgive.

This love is free and generous. It is grace, a gift, a love that can never be earned, therefore we need never worry about it. God's love is certain, unshakable, unwavering and unbreakable.

Again, love is seen in our caring, our compassion and our service. Let us live in this moment of God's grace, abiding in love, sharing love with all, and let's love one another for love is from God. Alleluia. Amen.