

## DON'T FORGET IN THE DARK WHAT LOVE SPOKE IN THE LIGHT

---

Series: God Is Love  
October 7, 2018  
Edgar King  
Beloved, Love  
1 John 4:7-8

Great, 4 weeks of a series focused on suffering. And if anyone hoped for a neat packaging of answers for suffering, they might be a bit disappointed. Because things are more complicated than we think. Things are bigger than we know. We can hardly grasp everything that we can see and we can hardly see everything that we grasp.

Truth be said, we could spend more time talking about suffering and even when Kingdom come we will still not have figured an iota out. Because there is nothing we could say to a suffering person that would make the pain go away. And the truth is nod in a agreement with the things we say here but in the moments of darkness it's hard to see what you knew in the light.

Now it's our job as a community to be there and echo truths that may be hard for you to wrap your head around in those times. Truth that in darkness you can only hold on to by faith and that is why we did this series. To give people something to hold on to in the darkness of suffering.

The sad truth is that when the community is gone, when you retreat to yourself. When you go to your empty house once full by all the auctioneers took away. When you go to your empty bed where once laid someone you gave your life to. When you take the pills to control the pain ravaging your once healthy body. When you look at the wall to the picture of your mother who once walked with you. When you look at your contact list to see the friends who have now turned bitter foes. It's easy to be filled with doubt and end up asking the question "Does God really love me?"

So this week I want to wrap up the conversation on suffering while introducing our next conversation for the next 7 weeks that will lead us into advent. A journey of investigating God's love for us. Does God really Love me, you, us? Does God know you exist? Does He really know your name? Is he concerned for your life? Is he busy with other things in the world or at least with other people but now you?

Because let's be honest this is a question that we sometimes battle with, especially when it hurts. So that new series will be done throughout Trinity Vineyard from Trinity Kids to Bonfire

to our Sunday Celebrations. We will have small short term small groups so that we can have these conversation even outside the church.

Spoiler alert, Yes God does love you. You are His favorite. Now if you doubt this journey with us the next couple of weeks and give us a chance to invite you into that space.

And you know, we will be reading pastoral letters written by very interesting people. Let me give a bit of context. The book we call the Bible contains a collection of different books. In the new testament some of what we call books were actually letters written by church leaders. We will be looking at some of them because they contain such beauty considering who the writers were.

I mean, if you were in the position of some of these people the only logical thing to do would be to quit on the object of your love. Because they would not get you out of your pain or even worse they would not get you out of the pain you are in yet it is for them you got there to begin with.

Take for example a guy called John who is even spoken of as Jesus' favorite disciple at least by his own account. When Jesus was about to be taken from physical view of his disciples the disciples of Jesus were whispering amongst themselves a rumor that John would never die until Jesus comes back. This is how much they thought Jesus favored John.

John, in one of his letters, introduces the world to a very interesting view of God. Actually he uses words that had never before this time been used to describe God. In human language God had been described as a mighty warrior, as one who's voice thunders, as a mother hen covering her chicks as a father loving his son. But never before had God or any other idols human being worship been called Love itself.

You see John introduces us to this very unique idea that sum God up if you could, the answer is love. That God is love. Essentially, he created because of love, because he holds everything in place then it is love that hold everything in place and when time as we know it comes to an end what we find is love.

People had views of God and whatever they worshipped as gods as distant, Just doing things because they could. Uninvolved with human beings except for when it brought them pleasure, even where there were loving attributes, it was conditional and even with self serving motives.

But Jesus introduces us to God in a very unique way that in John's words all that can be said is "God is Love" and to know God is to love.

If there are a few verses that capture one of the main themes for the letter John writes its this

1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

And there it is. God is love. And love becomes the marker for those who know him. A revelation that changes the whole world. Look at how he begins this pastoral letters,

1 John 1:1-4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

Let's do the together again

That which was from the beginning - he has become so passionate and convinced about what he is about to share. He is convinced that this is not a new endeavor, God has just not the other day decided to become love. He was convinced that even before he was born, before the nation of Israel was born, before the story of humanity as we know it, before Jesus was revealed to them as he was, the story had always beam the same that God is love.

God has not just in the past year decided to love you because you did this or that. God has not just thought that maybe what you need in life is love. It has not just dawned on God that you are worthy of love, rather God has always been love. God has always loved from the beginning.

And even the words from the beginning are our way of expressing time but God has no beginning and no end which means, God has loved you endlessly. I don't think the English language has a verb for something that has happened, is happening and will continue happening.

which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we

have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our[a] joy complete.

It gives them, him and other like him, so much joy to write and talk about these things. His conviction he lets us know comes from actually experiencing this. Touching this, listening to this, seeing real life. It's one thing to be told about the beach. You can even imagine the turquoise waters as someone narrates the story. You can close your eyes and picture yourself playing in the waves of the sea and you would agree that it is a mind blowing experience.

It's a totally different experience to get on a plane or take the train down to Mombasa and be in the waters yourself. You almost wanna come back and retell the story of a beach experience to the person who told you about their beach experience. Because for you it is now something you have seen and touched.

Okay some of us do not like swimming. Some of us just live for our stomachs. Maybe this will bring you home. It's one thing to know that Thai people eat. So we call that Thai food and I guess in Thailand (or what in Kenya we call 'thighland' - which is honestly just sounds weird) - they just call it food. And it is known world over that these are some of the best cuisines in the whole world.

If God blessed different nations with different gifts, Thai food is one of theirs. And you can be told over and over again about how mouth watering they are. Just a taste of heaven. And you can even agree. But if you are like me, the day you taste Thai food. Tears will roll down your face.

It is indeed an experience of heaven. I have had awareness of God's presence, mostly in worship, secondly in just the randomness of doing life. But I never thought, I would hear whispers of God's love through my taste buds. I know I have made you hungry but don't worry we will release you early enough for lunch.

And for John the disciple of Jesus, this is the story. He is saying the things he is writing are from actually walking and touching Jesus. Seeing life, eternal life. Encountering it. Not just a story he was told but he touched it. And his encounter with Jesus Christ who was the image of the father convinced him of one thing never thought about before, That God is love.

John having seen Jesus interact with people. John Having seen Jesus touch the weak. John having seen Jesus even in his stern calling out of the religious people he could only come to one conclusion, that was love in action. That God is love.

Aside from pastoral letters, John writes the story of the life of Jesus in what was creatively called the Gospel of John of the Gospel according to John. And in his telling of the story John repeatedly calls himself Jesus' beloved because clearly he is a very humble person. And in my assessment I do not see anything in particular that would say he was preferred to the others. But he looked into Jesus' eyes and heard Jesus talking about him and to him and he was convinced that he was most loved.

Maybe Peter also looked into Jesus' eyes and heard him talk to him and about him and conclude that he was the beloved only that John claimed the title first so he kept quiet about it.

Maybe Bartholomew another one of Jesus' disciples whom we hear nothing about after he is picked felt he was the most beloved and he just sat thinking, "I am the most beloved. I don't have to prove myself. I'll just keep a low profile"

Actually John records a story of a close friend of Jesus. His entire family were good friends and this guy was so sick and they feared he was going to die, which he actually did. When they went to Jesus, their words were "the one you love is sick". So here is another one of Jesus' friends so convinced that he is the one Jesus loves. And when he did die, it broke Jesus. He cried.

Are you getting my drift? Was there something about Jesus that everyone in his presence felt most loved and as if he focused his entire attention off the whole universe to just them? What if John is right in thinking himself to the beloved but also is Peter and James and Bartholomew and Lazarus.

What if you are God's favorite and He is God's favorite and so is she and so is that person who is not sure of the whole he she pronoun thing.

Its applying for a job where everyone else is more qualified and you do not even try too hard and you get picked. Because somehow God's hand is on you. Somehow you know that you are God's favorite. But what if you are the one not getting employed or the one losing your job?

There is something about when John writes this letter worth our attention. You see while John was writing this profound statement. While he was filled with fiery passion about Jesus. He was not a free man. He was not a happy man. He was not a man without trouble. Pain was his companion.

My grandmother was in church last Sunday. I am named after her. She no longer likes leaving her house, her home. Its small but she would rather sit by her door. She was in Nakuru for a few weeks and she had grown tired of this city. I remember seeing her sit by

her door one day. And I saw what I think was sadness in her face. She is a very joyful woman. Loves to dance and joke around. So I asked what was wrong. She said, all her friends were dying off and she even desired to not be left behind. When everyone you grew up with, when everyone who knows you and you can call friend is dying it's a hard place to be. You will soon have no reason to live yourself.

John was exactly at that place. Now an old man. His friends and peers and people he considered children were dying left right and center. But unlike my grandmother it was not old age or disease. They were being murdered because they believed in Jesus.

Here is every reason for you to quit and stop this madness. Here is every reason for you to deny Jesus or at least deny him on paper. Because the only reason they were not Killing John was they feared they would make him a hero or even cause an uprising. So they put him in an island as a prisoner with hard labor removed from all connection.

This is when it hurts. This is where you quit, run for your life. Ask whether God is still Love. You ask whether you were God's favorite, are you really God's beloved if even in his name you are made to suffer and he seems not to change a thing? So what do you say of such a person?

And John was not the only one. Paul was another guy who when he wrote to the church he urged them to clothe themselves in love. But before Paul started working to build the church he was working to destroy the church. The same way we have missionaries traveling beyond their culture be it national or just tribal to share the message of Jesus, Paul traveled, get this to imprison followers of Jesus.

Then Paul meets Jesus and in the presence of God even though it was not a meeting because of how good he had been, Paul is immediately confronted by love and he gives his entire life to spreading the good news of Jesus. So much so, that Paul was imprisoned, beaten up repeat and eventually killed for this.

Had Paul experienced Love that was stronger than pain? A love that could not be drowned or silenced?

What is it about God's love that once we experience it, it captures our whole world? Knowing God's affection for us, experiencing God's love for us seems to make everything else the world could throw at us appear so small as probably they actually are.

And we can count one after the other. Peter, James who was Jesus' brother and finally comes to call him His Lord. Thousands of believers after that. Who refused to abandon their

faith even to death. Oh this kind of love. What kind of love is this that once we taste it, we want for nothing else.

God is love. This is what we are being invited into. Not a new religion, or new church or new set of rules or new worship. We are being invited into love.

And when we have experienced love it will change our religion, change our church, change the way we live life and change how we worship.

This is what John, Peter, Paul and the others had experienced and were convinced of. That they had experienced something that they were so convinced about that not even the darkest of night could blind their sight of it.

I am inviting you to lean into God's love that you will be so sure of Him in the dark, as you were sure of Him in the light. In the depths of God's love we will not forget in the dark what he says to us in the light.

Do not forget in the Dark what Love has said in the Light.

Because in the light, God's says you are worthy. When you are dumped by the one person you gave your life to, you will remember you are.

When God says you are beautiful in the light, when in the dark you cannot see that in the mirror, you will still remember you are.

When in the light of God's perfect love He says I have called you, in the darkness of the ministry you are leading failing and struggling you will still remember you are called.

When in the light of God's love God promised to give you a family, in the darkness of a struggling marriage or a seemingly never ending season of single hood remember God's promise.

I want us to fully lean into God's love because the night is coming or it may be night time in your life already or you may've just come from the darkest of nights in your life. We can hold on to God's love, because when night comes we will still declare that God is love.

I want us to do 2 things as I wrap up. Both will need your participation. Church can easily become another thing on our list of to do's where instead of running into community we come sit and do not engage with ourselves or anyone else. We have a way of keeping ourselves busy just to escape ourselves and others and church sometimes can become that.

I want us to slow down and engage with people. There is someone sitting next to you. I want you to turn to them and say to them with conviction,

You are invited into Love.

I want us to read the following verses together as a community. And if you have trouble believing this, I want you to pray the words, God help my unbelief

#### Community Reflection

So who can separate us? What can come between us and the love of God's Anointed? Can troubles, hardships, persecution, hunger, poverty, danger, or even death? The answer is, absolutely nothing.

Even when because of you, our lives are endangered constantly;  
we are like sheep waiting to be slaughtered.

But no matter what comes, we will always taste victory through Him who loved us. For I have every confidence that nothing—not death, life, angels, evil spirits, our present, our future and our pasts, spiritual powers, height, depth, nor any created thing—can come between us and your love oh God revealed in your son, Jesus our Lord.

#### Closing Prayer