

**Prayer of the Day:**

Almighty God, your Son our Savior was taken up in glory and intercedes for us at your right hand. Through your living and abiding Word, give us hearts to know him and faith to follow where he has gone; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Alleluia. (John 14:18)

**Sermon Text:**

**ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE** or at least that's what the Beatles sang in 1967. There is the free love movement of the 60's and 70's which started as a movement to remove church and state from matters of marriage but which became a far different critter by it's end. Of course there is the similar refrain in our world today that would announce it doesn't matter who you love and that love is a personal matter not to be regulated, spoken against, or defined in anyway.

John is known as the Apostle of love. He speaks extensively about it throughout His 3 letters and even in the gospel which bears his name (consider John 3:16). But John is not a hippie, nor is he advocating that the church should keep its nose out of matters of the heart. Instead, he would tell us that God has much to say about love and that ultimately any love that is not based in God's love for us is missing a key component. So today, though I doubt very much that this is what the Beatles had in mind, we'll steal their famous refrain and join with John, not Lennon but the Apostle, as we say, **ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE!**

Now obviously, there are different kinds of love. Without getting into the four loves made famous by C.S. Lewis. I think we can easily agree that love, if spoken of is going to need to be defined. After all I Love pizza and my wife but those loves are very different, at least they better be.

Note then that John anchors love in one location. *We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.* "God is love," says John. It finds its being, its completeness, its confidence in Him. That of course has much to say about the so-called love of the world. Anything that opposes the holy will of God is not love at all but rather something different.

**Text: 1 John 4:13-21 (NIV84)**

<sup>13</sup> We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup> In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

<sup>19</sup> We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup> If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup> And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Paul gives one example at the end of our lesson then. *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.* Those are pretty pointed words from God, who obviously has very little time for hatred in the hearts of His people. However, this goes beyond the fifth commandment and Jesus' own explanation in Matthew chapter 5(:21-22) that hatred is murder.

Recall that Jesus' two-fold summary of the law is *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27)'"* "Love neighbor" is really a keeping of the last seven of the commandments and not simply the fifth. So, *"If anyone says, "I love God (1<sup>st</sup> table of the law)," yet (is disrespectful of those in authority) hates his brother (does not love their spouse, steals from neighbor, gives false testimony, or covets), he is a liar."* So Paul tells the Romans (13:10) and all of us, *"Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."*

Of course, we now have a bit of a problem. Unless we are completely overcome with arrogance and an intense love of self, we will quickly realize that we are not perfect. Each and everyone of us has failed to show the kind of love God speaks about here. Cut me off in traffic or be one of those people who takes 3 hours to order at a McDonald's drive through and already the anger and resentment are building let alone if we are getting all ten Commandments into the mix. Does this mean I am a liar, a false Christian, who knows nothing of the love of God?

Dear Christian, having breathed deeply of the Law of our God once again, take a break and back up a bit. The Law always kills, always exposes our sinfulness, and we need that to be able to address the sin which rages not just in the world out there but within the heart in here. But having looked at how God defines love for us, now let's look at where this love will always come from.

*We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.* The love of which God speaks in our lesson will always originate with Him. And so we are back to John 3:16, *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* The Gospel grants life, as God lives in us through it whether in Word or Sacraments. The Gospel grants life eternal with God in heaven even though we lack the love which God so freely displays for us in our everyday lives. The Gospel grants salvation to souls desperately in need of it.

But then something else occurs. John writes, *We love because he first loved us.* As I begin to see all things through the lens of the cross once again, God fuels this feeble frame with all that it needs to love. To love Him in response to all He has done for me, to love my neighbor in all of those various forms because if God could forgive me, if God would give up His Son for me, well then perhaps I can forgive, perhaps I can love others as I reflect God's love in the world around me. No longer afraid of the punishment that lurks around the corner because of my sin, no longer fearful of questions like have I done enough, loved enough, obeyed enough. Jesus was enough. He has loved perfectly for me, for you and freed me to love, to love family, friends, even my enemies, yes, my neighbors.

**ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE!** Turns out the Beatles were on to something in 1967. Though it is not the twisted and perverted love the world in which we live. It's God's perfect love, perfectly shown and given in our Savior Jesus so that having supplied our ever need, we might love one another. Amen.