



Leaders: choose some, but not all of the following questions. Email me with any questions. Mark.

Week 4 – You are more loved than you dare hope – 1 John 4:7-12

1. Is there anything that stood out for you from the passage or message? New insights?
2. In the message it was suggested that the whole concept of love is completely confused today. Share your thoughts on this with one another.
3. Why do you think that people can't get enough songs, books and movies about love and being 'in love'?
4. Do you agree that apart from food, water, clothes and shelter, the desire to be loved is one of the most basic desires we have? Why?
5. Read Matthew 10:29-31. What conclusions does Jesus ask us to draw from the fact that God cares for sparrows and knows the number of hairs on our heads?
6. How can you tell if someone loves you? – what are some of the sure signs?
7. Read 1 John 4:9-10. Explore all the certain signs of God's love for us in these two verses.
8. What does 'atoning sacrifice' mean and what drove God to deal with our sin in this way?
9. What experiences or situations sometimes lead you to doubt God's love for you? How do you normally deal with such doubt?
10. Someone says to you 'I doubt God loves me'. How do you help them understand just how deeply they are loved?
11. Another person says to you: "no, you don't understand, I have done some terrible things in my life. There is no way God's love would extend to me!". What do you say to them?
12. If you had a friend join you for church on Sunday and on their way home they said, "that was amazing; I didn't realise God loved me to the extent – how do can I get started with God and experience that love?", where would you start?

Thank the Lord for his amazing love for us, shown by Jesus' atoning sacrifice. Pray that we will respond by returning that love for Him and by loving one another.

Date: 25 July 2021
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: Give me 15 minutes
Title: You are more loved than you ever dared hope
Passage: 1 John 4:7-12
Aim: To show how the gift and atoning sacrifice of Jesus reveals the depths of God's love - even for the unlovely.

- I have some wonderful news for you today.
- I have 15 minutes to assure you that **you are more loved than you ever dared hope!**
- And if you're watching today because a friend has invited you – I'm **SO glad...** you're **so welcome...** I hope you that you can take away with... an assurance that you are in fact deeply loved... ///

- How do you **know** if you're loved?
- It seems the whole **concept** of love is completely **confused today**
- Someone will say '*I love you*' but you may not be sure if they **mean** it...
- ...they just want something in **return...**
- Perhaps you are being **manipulated...**
- So many **songs** about love: '*all you need is love*' the famous Beatles song – and how **many** songs about love since then...!!
- And so many **movies** – **rom coms!**
- Books – **Mills and Boon...**
- From *Pride and Prejudice* and *Mr Darcy...*
- To *Bridget Jones diary* – *Harry met Sally* – *Love actually* – *Pretty Woman* – *Sliding doors...* on and on the list could go on...
- We **want** to believe in **love...**
- And we **love** a good **romance...** //
- Perhaps... perhaps / because we long to be **loved ourselves...** we love to be in that circumstance of love...
- We **entertain** the **hope** that we are **lovable...** that someone **would** want to **shower** US with their **affection...** that someone would want to look **out** for us... **look** after us... that we might feel **safe and secure** and **protected in another's love...** we **long** for that feeling of **intimacy** and **warmth in connection with another...** ///
- Apart from **food and water and clothes and shelter**, it's probably one of the most **basic desires we have** – to be **loved.**
- To know that **someone, somewhere, loves** us.
- Loves us – **despite** all the stuff that's not so **nice** about us.
- Loves us even when we are at our **worst!///**
- Do **you** have someone who loves you like that?
- **Unconditionally.** '**Warts and all**', the old phrase said.
- Loves you '**just the way you are**'... as **Billy Joel** sings?
- **Wife, husband, brother, sister, close friends;** perhaps one **special close friend?** //

- **mum** or **dad**; **grandparents**? //
- To know that you are **loved** by someone, is a very precious thing... and **too often** taken for **granted!** ///
- But let me **ask** you this morning: Do you think **God** loves you?
- Does he even **know** you?
- **Care** about you?
- Does he know what's going on in your **life** today? – inside your **head** today?
- **THE BIBLE SAYS HE DOES!** //
- Yes – even since before you were **born**... he's **known** you... while you were being put together in your mothers' **womb** he **knew you**....the Bible says //
- even knows the numbers of **hairs** on your **head**...!!
- We saw in week 1 in this series that Jesus Christ in the 1st century was **God turned up on earth**... and while he was here he said:

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. [Matthew 10]
- If he cares for **sparrows**... you can be sure he cares for you... for you are worth much **more** than **sparrows**...
- Yes – he knows you **well**.
- And he loves you **deeply** – **DESPITE** his knowledge of you!! //
- **HE LOVES YOU...!**
- He loves even someone like **me**!!
- ...with all my **faults** and **failings**, all my **selfishness** and my **anger** sometimes; all my **rebelliousness** against him – he **loves** me.
- And **YOU** – even with all **your** faults and **failings** and **selfishness** and **anger** and **rebelliousness** against him... ///
- I'm here to assure you this morning that you are more **loved** than you **dared hope**... //
- You know we use the word '**love**' all the time don't we?
- We use it almost **carelessly** – I love *shopping* – I love *ice cream*... so we use it for unimportant things – but we also use it to say 'I love my *mum* and *dad*', I love my *grandparents*... then we'll say – I love *chocolate*.... - we use the word 'love' in all sorts of **messy** and **mixed up** ways...
- But the Bible uses it **carefully** and when it uses the word '**love**' it chooses a word that speaks of the most **passionate, powerful commitment you can imagine** - a care that will **cost** you – a **dedication** that will involve **sacrifice**.
- The type of love that cannot be **happy** if the person whom you love is in **trouble** or **hardship** or faces **death**.... /
- **And this is the way God loves you.**
- And it's an **AMAZING REALITY!**
- It's an **EXTREME love. A COSTLY love.** //
- Let me ask you - how can you **tell** if someone loves you? //(Apart from what they say.)
- The real test of someone's love is how much they are prepared to sacrifice for you.
- Because it **is** possible isn't it to say 'I love you' and **not** mean it. //
- To say those words because you **want** something.
- So how do we know when the **claim** to love is **genuine**? //

- Well I think it's probably going to be found in the level of **pain** or **sacrifice** that they're willing to get **involved** in to **help** you.
- Think about the love of your **parents**... you can **see** over the years that they love you - because of what they've been willing to **sacrifice** for you – because of what it **cost** them to love you... **true??** /
- If a person says – 'I love you and care about you'... – but then is **unwilling** to do the **smallest** act of **self-sacrifice** – is unwilling to undergo any **inconvenience** to **help** you, to **enhance** your **life**, to meet you at your point of need - than their love is probably very **skinny** and not **worth** very much...
- **Real** love on the other hand says 'I will **give** to you – I will **give** – because you **matter**' – not just so I can **possess** and **own** you... not so I can get something in return - but because I **value** you - I will **give** and I will **give** – even if it **costs** – even if it **hurts**...
- the **measure** of love is what you will **give**...
- So – if we're looking for evidence that **God** loves us –where's the **evidence**...?
- Well – we **read** of it in the reading... do you recall?
- This is what we read in 1 John 4:9-10: *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. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*
- He **gave to us... his only Son**...
- God had a **Son**. An **only Son**.
- **One eternal Son** through whom he made **all things**.
- They'd **lived** together in a perfect rich loving **fellowship**, for **countless eternities** before they made the **universe**.
- They **delighted** in **each other**.
- He was the **beloved** Son.
- **Only Son**.
- And he **gave** that Son **to us**.
- It doesn't mean he sent him for a **visit** – like the Queen sending Prince Charles for a **week**...
- Not **that sort** of giving
- No – he sent his Son as **an atoning sacrifice for our sins**...
- **Atoning sacrifice** for our **sins**.
- Now - that's one of those very **religious** sounding phrases we hear in church a bit – '**atoning sacrifice**' – but what does it mean?
- You may know that the Bible makes it clear, that we've **all** mucked it **up** with **God**.... We saw that last week.
- Everybody has **cut** him out and **pretended** as though he doesn't **matter** or doesn't **exist**.
- We've **broken** our relationship with God. And the Bible says that is very **serious**.
- God is rightly **indignant** at the rebellion of his creatures.
- Not just – *cheesed off* – but **justly** – **morally** – **angry**.
- BUT - But he's not just going to **wipe us out**... do **away** with us or **start again** or **anything** like that...
- Because he **loves** us **so much**!
- But God does something **else** because he **cares**.
- **He loves you**.
- And he loves you **so** much, that in order to **SPARE YOU**, he **SACRIFICED** his **one and only SON**. /

- **Who died** instead of **you**; who died for you; who died in your **place**.
- Jesus **paid** the **penalty** when he died on the cross - for your sin, for your **lies**, for your **arrogance**, for your **impurity**, for your **disobedience**...
- ...for all the **hundreds** of times when we've broken his **commandments**....
- ...Jesus **died**.//
- **That's** how much God loves you.
- **That's** how much it cost God for **YOU** not to **perish**, but for **you** to have **eternal life**... ///
- that's the **extremity** - the **immensity** of God's love for you.
- He didn't **have** to.
- There's no **external force** driving him to do it.
- He did it because of his **own** love.
- He loves you. Loves you **SO** much.
- Jesus **dies**. // So you can **live**!! ///

- I'm here to tell you this morning that you are **deeply loved** by **God**!!!
- **Deeply loved**. ///
- **And you see it in the gift** – the sacrifice – the death and resurrection of his Son.
- So where does **this** leave you?
- There will be **some** here this morning for whom this is **nothing new**.
- You've known God's loved you all your life.
- You've known – you're comfortable in the fact that you're deeply loved by God and you get the significance of his Son's death for you, and you are **secure** and **confident** in that love.
- And to you I want to say – isn't this **great**?
- Isn't this **fantastic**? Isn't that **SO wonderful**?
- And I hope the reminder of this this morning, will simply cause your love for **God** to grow all the **more**! //

- But there'll be **others** here this morning, who are **struggling** with this a little – struggling because of some **sadness, sickness, tragedy, hardship** you are **facing**. And you're wondering if it's true God loves you?
- ... and to you I want to say – the Father did not set his **love** on you by sending His **Son** as a **sacrifice** for sin (**your** sin), only to **turn** on you and bring some disaster on you because he's stopped loving you. No – it's not true!
- He **loved** you when he sent his **Son** and he **still** loves you **now** – and the sending of his Son is the assurance of his love...
- ...So whatever it is you're **battling** with now, whatever it is that you're struggling with now, you need to go back to the gift of his Son and say 'well I don't understand what I'm facing, I don't like what I'm facing, I don't know why I'm facing it, but I DO know that it does NOT mean God has changed his mind on me... that God has stopped loving me.
- Run to him – go back to the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus and rest assured that whatever it is that you're facing now he still loves you, he's still loving you – in the midst of what you're going through.

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- And then there may be **others** here this morning, who have **never** understood the love of God in quite this way...
- Never understood that Jesus' **death** had anything to do with **you**... that he died for **you** //

- I want you to leave here this morning knowing this from the passage – 1 John 4 ***This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son has an atoning sacrifice for our sins.***
- It's the sure sign that you are **deeply loved** by God...
- And I want to invite you this morning to contact **me** or talk to your **minister** or the one who **invited** you to watch today or another trusted **Christian friend**, more about God's love for you – and to begin a **journey of discovery**...
- I want to invite you to welcome **God's love** into your **life**... to turn your life around from running away from him, to running toward him and inviting him into your life and seeing the astonishing and wonderful difference that knowing that you're loved by God will make in your life.
- I want to invite you to turn and run to God – to say "I'm sorry for pushing you aside and I now want to welcome you in.
- Will you do that today?
- Will you begin a journey of discovery of God's love for you.
- Knowing that he gave his Son for you, means that you can come to him and revel in his love and rest in his love and find the forgiveness that perhaps you've been longing for.

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- Well for some – nothing **new** – revel in it!
 - For some – battling hardship and questioning God's love... go **BACK** to the gift of his Son and know that he loves you no matter what he's going through...
 - And for some for whom this is completely new, today's the day to come back – or to come to him for the first time and to discover the joys of his love – of the relationship that he invites us to – of the forgiveness that he holds out for us... the life that he has for you...
 - I hope that you'll do that today...!