



"God's Love – Past Present and Future

John 3:16

[Play clip - "I Love You...."]

Please turn to **1 John 3**.

Valentine's Day was yesterday. People gave and received cards and letters expressing love to each other. We sent e-mails. We gave candy. We said "I love you!"

Isn't love a wonderful thing!? I love - love. I love to love, and I love to be loved.

And I feel a lot of love in this place.

Since Valentines Day just past, I thought we'd focus in on LOVE for February.

Knowing what the Bible says about love, we have to begin the subject of "love" on "God's love". For the Bible says that love, real love, begins with God.

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

1 John 4:10 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

1 John 4:19 *We love because he first loved us.*

As I became acquainted with my Lord, I learned a little bit about love. This morning I want us to take a look at **God's love – past, present and future.**

John 3:16 *"For 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.*

And as I have been preparing for this series on love, one overarching truth about love has been echoing around in my brain. Whether you are talking about God's love, or about human love. Some people think that love is for weak people, but it's just the opposite -- **Real Love takes Guts!**

Now, can you image this scene? God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, enveloped in perfect love and goodness, creating. For five days they had created a beautiful world. It was Utopia. It was Shangri-La. It was Eden. Can you imagine what it must have been like? It must have been a feast for the eyes. The perfume of flowers and trees and bushes scented the air. The sounds of birds singing and cats purring. It must have been a delight to every sense.

But one thing was missing. And God turned and said, *"I've got an idea! Let's make a new creature! Let's make him like us – in our image. He can take care of this for us. He will be the boss of all this beauty we have created."*

Sound a little far-fetched? Read it for yourself.

Genesis 1:26-27 *"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."*

We were created in God's image. When you think of God – what image do you think of? Holiness? He certainly is holy. Justice? He absolutely is a just God. Good? He is pure goodness.

The Bible also says that the essence of God is love. John wrote in 1 John 4:8, *"God is love"*. He then repeated it again in v. 16. Do you get it? You need to know that the essence of God – is love. *"God is love"*

1. In the PAST, He created you in love.

Before you were ever born, God dreamed of you. He desired you. He made you with gentle, loving hands. The Psalmist puts it this way,

Psalm 139:13-16 *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

In your past, God loved you so much that, as you were being created in the womb, God was there, watching with eyes of love, as you came into being. Before the world was ever created, God had thoughts of you. Before you were even born, God was there – loving you. But the greatest expression of His love for you in the past – was the cross. Listen to **John 3:16** again.

"For 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."

Before you were born, God took on human form, came to earth as a baby, so He could grow up and die for you. The result of sin, of rebelling against God, is death. Before you ever committed one sin, Jesus paid the price for it. So you don't have to pay for your sins – Jesus did.

Like I said before, real love takes guts. It takes sacrifice. And the greatest love of all is God's, and it took the greatest sacrifice. Jesus laid down his life for you and for me. And he did it because he loved you.

So now you don't have to earn your way to heaven or work your way to heaven. Jesus provided everything we need to get us from here to there. All we need is Him. And it all happened in your past.

2. God loves you, right now, in the PRESENT.

Right now, at this moment, God loves you. Do you know He is here? Do you understand that Jesus is right here with you? Jesus said,

"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." **Matthew 18:20**

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." **Matthew 28:20**

"...for God is present in the company of the righteous." **Psalm 14:5**

Psalm 47:1-3 *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."*

God is an 'ever-present' help. You are getting slammed with negativity every day. You fear you may lose your job; your home; your family; your life. God is here. Even if the earth gives way and the mountains fall and a tsunami storms in the sea – it's going to be okay. God is here. God is present.

I tell you there have been times I didn't feel love. I didn't feel God around me. But that did not mean that was so.

A University professor who was well known for attacking God, challenged his students with this question. "Did God create everything that exists?" A student bravely replied, "Yes he did!"

"God created everything?" The professor asked. "Yes sir, he certainly did," the student replied. The professor answered, "If God created everything; then God created evil. And, since evil exists, and according to the principal that "our works define who we are," then we can assume God is evil."

The student became quiet and did not answer the professor's hypothetical definition. The professor was quite pleased with himself, feeling he had proven that the Christian faith was a myth.

Another student raised his hand and said, "May I ask you a question, professor?" "Of course", replied the professor. The student stood up and asked, "Professor, does cold exist?" "What kind of question is this? Of course it exists. Have you never been cold?"

The young man replied, "In fact sir, cold does not exist. According to the laws of physics, what we consider cold is in reality the absence of heat. Absolute zero (-460 F) is the total absence of heat. Cold does not exist. We have created this word to describe how we feel if we have no heat."

The student continued, "Professor, does darkness exist?" The professor responded, "Of course it does." The student replied, "Once again you are wrong sir, darkness does not exist either. Darkness is in reality the absence of light. Light we can study, but not darkness. You cannot measure darkness. Darkness is a term used by man to describe what happens when there is no light present."

Finally the young man asked the professor, "Sir, does evil exist?" Now uncertain, the professor responded, "Of course, as I have already said. We see it everyday. It is in

the daily examples of man's inhumanity to man. It is in the multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil.

To this the student replied, "Evil does not exist, sir, or at least it does not exist unto itself. Evil is simply the absence of God – it is the absence of love. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that man has created to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not have God's love present in his heart. It's like the cold that comes when there is no heat, or the darkness that comes when there is no light."

Do you understand how important love is? You need to love and you need to realize you are loved. God loves you right NOW! You, personally. If God had a wallet, YOUR picture would be in it!

If you can't 'feel' love – believe it anyway. God said it. I believe it! That settles it – for me.

3. He will Continue to Love You in the FUTURE.

God loved us in the past, He loves us right now, and He will love us in the future. Jeremiah records these words of God,

Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

God is saying those words to you. You have a future. You can have the expectation that good things are coming. In our text, Jesus said that God loved the world so much that He provided eternal life for all of us who believe. Not only does He promise eternal life – but He promises so much more. Listen.

Psalms 37:4 *"Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart."*

2 Corinthians 4:17 *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."*

1 Peter 5:1 *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."*

1 Corinthians 2:9 *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"*

OUR RESPONSE

God's love – past, present and future. It is a reality. God makes it so clear that He loves us. But the question is - have we responded to that love?– do we love Him? Have we chosen to love Him in return?

Let's face it. We are born with the great '*love of our life*' being - ourselves. We love US with all our heart and soul and strength. We buy things to make US happy. We do things that bless US. We even love others – if they can meet our needs and desires. If they can't – we get rid of them.

Even when we have low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority – it is an expression of our love for ourselves. We have unfulfilled expectations – and it cause all sort of problems. But it's a symptom of self-love.

God asks us to lay that selfish love aside – and love Him FIRST and MOST. And I have to tell you – it's not natural. It doesn't come easy. But with His help – it results in eternal joy; eternal love; eternal reward.

Loving God comes from getting to know Him. For me, that meant reading about Him in His Word. He reveals Himself to us in the pages of the Bible. He revealed Himself to me through prayer and through worship and through loving others.

But it begins with a choice. Whom are you going to make the 'love of your life?' Yourself? Another person? Things? Or Jesus?

I choose Jesus. That love relationship begins with a prayer like this:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for your great love for me. Thank you for loving me so much you died for me. Please forgive me for not loving you like I should have. I have been selfish and rebellious. Please forgive me. From this point on, I will strive to live a life of love for you. Please help me to love. Teach me to love. Cleanse my heart and mind and life. May I be a sweet fragrance of love to You.

In Jesus' Name