



ROSE  
HILL  
CHURCH

1 John 4:13-21  
Encouragement: 1 John  
“What’s Love Got To Do With It?”

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Today we continue our series going through 1 John. And this morning we get to a section that repeats some themes that we have seen previously, and continues a theme that we got into last week, and that is love. **We should probably recognize that we say we “love” a lot of different things.** We’ve talked about this before, but it’s good to get a refresher. I might say that I love the University of Washington and its football team (especially when they’re 10-0), I love snow-skiing, and I love my wife and kids. Clearly, *one* of those “loves” is different than the others, right? We mean different things when we talk about love. And my love for skiing is deep. 😊 Just kidding, obviously...the love for my family stands out from my other loves. It’s different than the other two loves.

But the passage today is not about romantic love between a man and a woman, or love from a parent to a child, or a child to the parent...and it’s certainly not about the love we might have for a hobby or a team or chocolate or money, or the new car, tv, or house we just bought or new job we got, or anything along those lines. But, the love we read about *does impact* all those other loves. There’s actually a connection. And maybe you’ve struggled with love. Maybe love has seemed elusive to you. The passage today has some encouraging and reassuring things to say about love – both us being loved, and about loving others. So, let’s read **1 John 4:13-21**, God’s word to you and me today.

So, as you heard, there’s a lot said about love here, and it started in the last few verses that we read last week, and is a strong theme earlier in the letter as well. **Twenty-eight times in just this 4<sup>th</sup> chapter alone, some form or another of the word “agape” (love) is used.** “Agape” is one of the Biblical words for “love” and it really is a truly Biblical word. There is almost no usage of it in ancient Greek writings until the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew to Greek in the 200’s B.C. Technically, it was a word that existed before – it wasn’t *invented* by the translators – but it was virtually ignored. Then it got used in translating the Old Testament Hebrew, particularly when speaking of God’s love for people, and suddenly it came to

life and has incredible depth of meaning. And so, it literally gained its definition because of its biblical usage. This is not romantic love or brotherly love or love of money or stuff; there are other Greek words for those kinds of love. "Agape" is a committed, dedicated, steadfast, kind of love – like God's love for people. And it's used 28 times in different formats here in just the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter alone.

Now, there's a lot about love in these verses we just read, but it boils down to this very basic fact: that **God is love, the object of his love is you and me, and any love we have is in response to God's love for us.** The object of his love is people – before we've done anything to deserve it and even though quite frequently we've done much to push God and his love away. He persists. There are some key verses here that really help us see this love in a new light.

First, we see here that God loved us in the past, loves us in the present, and will love us in the future. We see the assurance of this in this passage in some key verses. I'll take these in numerical verse order, though how they impact us chronologically is actually in a different order. But first, in verse 16 we read, "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 them" (1 John 4:16). **This (1 John 4:16) gives us the assurance that God loves us here and now, in the present.** God loves you just as you are. It's a love that God "has" for us and we live in that love, here and now.

In verses 17-18 we read, "This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 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" (1 John 4:17-18). These two verses together give us an assurance of God's love in the future. We can have confidence on the "day of judgment". When we stand before our creator God and he asks on what basis might we be with him in his holy presence for all eternity, we will have nothing to stand on but the firm foundation of Jesus. **Verses 17-18 are an assurance about his love for us for the future, when we can have confidence before him because of his love that he's shown us in Jesus.**

And then lastly, in verse 19, we read that this love God has isn't just for now and the future, but it started in the past. "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). **Note the past tense (verse 19), "he first loved us." It's something he's already done, before we've done any loving of our own.** In fact, we love *because* he first loved us. We've done nothing to deserve this love. It is all of God's free will choosing to love you and me, and it started before we did anything that might possibly warrant it.

And the thing is – and we talked about this some last week as well – this love God has is simply foundational to who he is. As verse 16 says, "God is love." It's part of who he is. And it's not hypothetical or theoretical. God has loved with action through Jesus Christ as verse 14 says and as we've seen throughout this letter and as Jesus himself teaches. "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). **Love is only love when it's put into action, and God models it himself in Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection.**

So, when John concludes this section with yet another plea, as we saw a few weeks ago in chapter 2, and touched on elsewhere, that our faith, and our love is to be put into action...when he concludes with this plea, this application of what it means to be loved by God, it is completely rooted in how God has loved us: with action, in spite of who we are. We love God and our brothers and sisters in the Lord, in tangible ways. **Like Jesus, our real love for him and for one another is only love when it has substance, action, sacrifice and a real cost to it.** When we talked about putting our love into action a few weeks ago, we talked about acts of service, and the correlating time we give that goes with it. So: serving in the church, for the sake of loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord. When we do that, we demonstrate our love for them, our love for one another, besides our love for the Lord.

**There's one more way we love each other and show our love back to God for his first love of us, however, and that is with our finances.** Now, at this point, you might be thinking, "Hey pastor, I thought this was a sermon on love, and last week you told us how you stick to Scripture passage when

you preach! What does love have to do with money?” And I would simply say in response that this is a sermon on love, based on a passage on love, and it’s titled, “What’s love got to do with it?” And right now, that’s the question you’re asking, so thank you very much! What’s love got to do with money? Well, I’m glad you asked. Because the answer is, “Everything.” Money is very closely tied to love. Scripture even says, “**The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil**” (1 Timothy 6:10). So, look, I could have titled this message, “The Sermon on The Amount”...and it would have fit the passage just fine.

At the opening of the sermon, each thing I suggested that competes for our love bank were all things that are connected to our money bank: I might buy a ticket to a UW football game, or a new hat or shirt to display my support for the Harvard of the West; I spend money when I go skiing or buy equipment that’s needed – though my skis are 19 years old so I’ve certainly gotten my money’s worth there; and loving my wife and kids...while love shows up in free gifts of time and service for sure, my love for them is certainly enhanced and demonstrated at times through the spending of money: Backrubs may be free, but the diamond ring on her finger was certainly not, and the Christmas gifts I give this year are not going to be free, either. If the Christmas gifts *are* free, because someone was giving away a used coat on the side of the road that I wrapped and put under the tree, then my marriage is going to be in trouble. Money and love *are* very closely tied together even if one does not equal the other; this is an inescapable truth. And the biggest problem is that sometimes we love our money...or at least, we love the things we get with our money.

**So, next Sunday, we will have the opportunity to turn in financial pledge cards for 2024, because we love Jesus and we love one another.** The pledge cards help your Elder board in setting a budget each year. One person sees the card you turn in, and it’s not me. It’s one of our people on staff who help with finance stuff. This is as much between you and God as we can make it, and still make responsible financial plans for our church. And of course, situations can change and sometimes we’re unable to give as generously as we pledged. Or, sometimes things change for the better and we are able to give more than we had pledged. The point is, however, we make a

financial pledge of love, not only to God, in response to his love for us, but also to one another, putting our love into action for one another.

When you give financially to the church, you are supporting the ministries that we have: the preaching, the music, the praying, the classes for adults, youth, and children; you support our missionaries all over the globe; you support the vision that we have to lead people toward Jesus where we live, work, and play. Whether the people in our lives are already very close to Jesus, or far away, we want to help each person in the Rose Hill family be so close to Jesus, so in tune as a disciple of Jesus, that we lead others toward him wherever we are. And: **When you give, it is an act of love that helps us all live into that vision.**

The fruit of that giving this year is lives impacted by the love of Jesus: care given to people battling cancer; families loved and supported as they welcome newborns; youth mentored and sent out on their next phase of life with Jesus as their foundation; prayers lifted up on behalf of nearly everyone in the congregation at one point or another; the hungry have been fed, the homeless have been sheltered, the gospel of salvation through Jesus proclaimed. Just recently, on a couple different Sundays, there has been a gentleman who's going through a rough season of life and has come to church a couple times admittedly looking for some help. One of our members has gotten to know him, prayed with him, and we've helped him out in tangible ways so he might be reminded that God loves him and there's a light at the end of the dark valley he's in right now. Your giving supports priceless ministries like that.

So, when we give, for sure, it's a sign to God about our love for Jesus, and what he's done. But it's also a sign of love to one another, and others who come into relationship with us. Let's make sure our love for Jesus outweighs our love for our money and our stuff, even as we recognize that: **We can't out-give or out-love God.** We might wonder how much to give, therefore. God asks for 10% - we see that affirmed in the Old and New Testaments. I would suggest, if you're not there, that you take what you gave this year, and increase by 10%. So, if you give \$5,000 this year, next year would be \$5500. If you gave \$1,000, it would be \$100 increase. For some, a 10% increase is

easy. We wouldn't miss it hardly at all. For some, that might be a bit step of faith.

Last Sunday night I was at a fundraiser dinner for the Kirkland and surrounding region of the Christian youth ministry organization called Young Life, where I learned of another way to consider how much to give. The keynote speaker, when it came time to ask people to give generously, he said, "Here's how I encourage you to decide how much to give: Give somewhere between what you can, and all you've got." ☺ I thought that was pretty creative. And here's the thing: **Even if you give all you've got to the ministries of Rose Hill Church, you still can't out-give God. He's given us both what he can and all he's got** (they're one and the same) **and we can't out-give him.** So, please prayerfully consider your financial pledge for 2024.

I want to bring this back to God's love for you and close with a story I came across this week. I don't know if this is true or not, but it could be. An elderly man hurried to his 8:00 a.m. doctor appointment. He wanted to finish quickly so he could get to his next appointment. The doctor asked what it was he was going to next. The man said that each morning at 9:00 a.m. at a nearby long-term medical facility he had breakfast with his wife. The doctor asked what her condition was. The man said that for 5 years she has had Alzheimer's and hasn't known who he is. The doctor asked why he continues to go every day if she has no idea who he is. The man replied, "Because I still know who she is." Similarly, whether you realize it or not: **God knows who you are, and he loves you and he keeps pursuing after you.** He doesn't love you in spite of who you are, he loves you *because* of who you are. Jesus has shown that love through his life, death, and resurrection. It's his costly gift of love that he gives.

Please know that God loves you, unconditionally, and keeps pursuing you. He keeps showing up – for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and every moment in between. He's loved you before in the past, now in the present, and he will keep loving you in the future. You can have confidence in that. And – for those of you who are new to Rose Hill – there's a group of Jesus-followers here at Rose Hill who love him back, and love one another. And if you're

newer to Rose Hill, we're happy to welcome you into this love. We're not perfect at it, but our heavenly father is, as he's loved us with everything he's got. So let's love him, and one another with all we've got as well. Let's pray...Amen.