

Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL  
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Worship Series: *Resurrection Reality*  
Service Theme: *Jesus' Business Is Love; Therefore, So Is Ours*  
Sermon Theme: *The Love Cycle*  
May 5, 2024— 1 John 4:7-11, 19-21

“Our business is love.” Do you know whose slogan that is? You might guess a jewelry company that specializes in diamond engagement rings. Or maybe a greeting card company. Or maybe even the candy company that makes those little Valentine’s Day message hearts! But “Our business is love” isn’t the slogan of any of those. It’s yours. It’s ours. God’s Word tells us that as Christians, our slogan is, “Our business is love.” But why?

Some might assume it’s because God commands us to make love our business. After all, God’s law, his Ten Commandments can be summarized with that one word—love. They’re all about loving God and our neighbor. Therefore, God makes love our business!

But that’s not it. As our theme for today reminds us, *Jesus' Business Is Love; Therefore, So Is Ours*. Our business is love because of the love that God has shown to us! Because God has called us to take part in what I’m calling **The Love Cycle**.

In our sermon text, the Apostle John—uncoincidentally called “*the disciple Jesus loved*” --wants us to focus on love. So much so that in this letter, one out of every 58 words is “love.” And in the 8 verses before us, John uses the word “love” 18 times! John certainly makes love his business in this letter! And he wants us to understand why.

As our sermon text begins, “*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.*” That’s the first stage of the love cycle: God loves us. And it has to be the first stage because love comes from God! That’s who

God is—his very nature is love! In fact, John goes so far as to say we can only truly love if we know God by faith!

Some people might argue with that, “There are plenty of non-Christians who are very loving! They love their spouse, they love their kids, they love their communities!” And that’s certainly true. But this is where it’s important to understand what kind of love we’re talking about here.

In Greek, there are four main words used for “love,” each with a different “flavor.” One is “*storge*,” the love built on biological relationship, like the love between parent and child. Another is “*Phileo*,” the love of friendship, built on shared interests or complimentary personality traits. Another is “*Eros*,” the love built on attraction in erotic or romantic love. Those three pretty well cover the different types of love we see in the world.

But there’s something important to note about each type of love. All three of them are built on certain qualities or features found in the other person.

Family members love each other deeply! But would those people love each other in the same way if they weren’t family? And friends love each other deeply, sometimes even as deep as family. But without their shared common interests, or the complimentary personalities that draw them together, would they love each other as deeply? And romantic love can certainly produce deep connections, but without those specific physical, mental, or emotional qualities that attract those people to their partners, would they really love them in the same way?

Basically, the different types of love we find in the world are built on certain attractive qualities or biological connections found in the other person. Except for one type of love; the kind of love the Apostle John is talking about here when he tells his listeners, “*Let us love one another, for love comes from God.*” That’s “*agape*” love.

Agape love is primarily understood as the love God has for us, shown most clearly in Jesus. As sinners, we have no attractive qualities that could lead a just and holy God to love us, but only deterrents to repel

him. And yet, he still loves us perfectly! So much so, that in his perfect love, God willingly sacrificed his one and only Son, the only one who truly deserved his love, to save unlovable sinners like us! And in his perfect love for us, Jesus willingly sacrificed himself to save us. As John writes, ***“This is love (agape!): not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”*** Therefore, agape love isn’t driven by beneficial qualities or merits in the other person. Agape love is completely selfless and sacrificial; love just for the sake of love!

Incredibly, Jesus says in today’s Gospel, ***“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.”*** As the Triune God, the Father’s love for the Son is completely perfect and beyond comprehension. And Jesus says that’s how he loves you! Isn’t that unfathomable? As sinful and undeserving as we are, Jesus loves us perfectly. The all-powerful, all-knowing, holy, eternal God who created and sustains the universe loves YOU! Odds are, the President of our country, the Governor of our state, or even the Mayor of our city don’t even know you exist. But the God of the universe not only knows you exist, not only knows you by name, he loves you perfectly, intimately, deeply. Infinitely deeper than a mother’s love for her child, or a husband’s love for his bride. That’s the first stage of the love cycle—the completely perfect, sacrificial, selfless love that God has shown to us and to all people in Jesus!

Which is exactly why our business needs to be love! That’s the second part of the love cycle: the love we show to our neighbor, which flows from God’s love for us. As John writes, ***“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. We love because he first loved us.”*** So, let me ask you this: Is love your business?

It might be easy to quickly respond, “Yes, of course!” as we think about our love for our kids, our spouse, or our best friends. But is that love always selfless? Or does our love sometimes fluctuate with a “What have you done for me lately?” attitude? Is our love for them always sacrificial? Or do we instead expect them to make all the sacrifices to suit our desires and meet our needs?

And doesn’t it tell us something that when John instructs us to ***“love one another,”*** we start doing mental gymnastics to determine who he means we need to love, and who we can exclude from that command? Do we only show love to those who are like us, who think like us, who struggle with the same things we struggle with, or who are going through the same season of life as us? But everyone else gets excluded. After all, there are so many people in this world who don’t do things to make us want to love them, but instead do so many things that repel us? That bully at school who spread lies and ruined your reputation. That co-worker who goes out of his way to tear you down and make your days miserable. That student in your class who never listens to you. That member of your congregation that undermines and complains about everything you do. Do you make loving them your business? Or do you scoff at the thought of loving them?

But John gives us a sobering warning. ***“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.”*** Love needs to be our business. Not just love for some people, or love for people who make it easy to love them. But love for all people. And if we refuse to love another, it’s evidence that there’s something seriously wrong with our love for God!

That’s why this agape love Jesus calls us to have for one another can only come from God, through Christ! Because our sinful nature is inherently selfish and self-focused. To have a selfless, sacrificial love for our neighbor can only come when we’ve been empowered and motivated by Jesus, and reminded of the selfless, sacrificial love that he has shown to undeserving, unlovable us! So when we find ourselves struggling to love another person, we need to continually run back to God’s perfect love for us! We need to run back to the cross for the forgiveness we need for our lack of love, and for the reminder of why love is our business!

That said, to love one another doesn’t mean we have to have warm fuzzy feelings for every person, or hang out with them all the time, or even approve of what they do or say. But it does mean you’re willing

to love them sacrificially and selflessly, for no other reason than that God loves you, and that God loves them! To love them not because of what they've done, but because of what Jesus has done!

And that's the final stage of the love cycle. When we, motivated by God's love for us, show love to others, God is giving us the all-important task of showing his love to them! We love them, so that by the Spirit's power, working through the Word, that person might come to faith and complete the cycle by showing love for God! As part of the love cycle, we not only get to be unworthy recipients of God's love, we also get to be channels of his love to others!

What an honor and opportunity we have! Especially during a time when so many people in the world show hatred and animosity toward others; especially during a time when many people think of Christians as judgmental, hateful, and unloving. We have an opportunity to show agape love to people, and in doing so, to show them the agape love Jesus has for them! Not to love them so we'll get something out of it. Not to love them only when they think and act like us. Not to love them only when they've earned it. But to simply love them—because Jesus loves us, and Jesus loves them! Can you imagine the impact that will have on people? The way that would change their perspective about us as Christians, and about our Christ?

Especially about Christ. Because in the end, it all comes back to his selfless, sacrificial love for us! As John says, ***“Love comes from God.”*** And deep down, whether they admit it or not, everyone knows it. All you have to do is follow the plot of almost every Disney movie or love story. They all show true love with one recurring theme: sacrifice. The hero gives up his life to save the damsel in distress. The princess sacrifices her royal status to be with her commoner true love. The parents sacrifice their dreams so their child can pursue his. Even in secular stories, true love is always shown with sacrifice. Why do you think that is? Because true love comes from God, who in agape love willingly made the greatest selfless sacrifice to save those he loves.

That's us! That's how John addresses the readers of his letter—including us. The English translation doesn't quite capture it when it says, ***“Dear friends.”*** John called his readers, ***“Loved ones.”*** That's who we are! Loved ones of God, who have been loved by God. And that's why our business is love. Because loved people love people.

So as we live in the love cycle, and our sinful nature demands, “Why should I love that person?” we can simplify it. Three simple reasons I want you to keep in your heart: 1.) Jesus loves you. 2.) Jesus loves them. 3.) We want them to know it, so they can love God too. Therefore, may our slogan always be, “Our business is love.” Because Jesus loved us first.