

Daily Update Jan 6th

1 John 4:11-18

When John writes this he draws attention to how Christian love is understood. First, a negative. Love is not understood in terms of our love for God. That would be too small a thing to compare. Second, the positive. Love for the Christian is understood in terms of God's love for us.

John wrote this letter at least in part because some erroneous teachers were extolling a different gospel. The secessionists had left John's community to offer a different gospel in which Christ's person and work were in question and the Christian's obligation to keep Christ's commands undermined, particularly to love their neighbour. Many of the key statements in John's letter challenge their fallacy, (see 1 John 1:6, 8 & 10), because they also tried to deny the atoning work of Jesus Christ's death on the cross, (1 John 5:6). What would we be, without the cross?

Christ is central to Christianity, the fullest expression of God's love towards us, from which our love for one another springs. John challenged those who preferred an introspective and selfish gospel, one that served themselves. It certainly was not focused on the love of God, because the Christian faith and the gospel do not work without the love of God. You simply cannot exclude him from our faith or our lives. This is especially important as we enter another lockdown with perhaps a further sense of separation and anxiety. Once we receive God's love in Jesus Christ we are joined to him, never alone and never without hope (v17).

Sigmund Freud said, "When pushed to your visceral limit, the real you will come out." What came out of Jesus was love . . . compassion . . . forgiveness. When it came to showing his love to us, he gave all he had. We have received this love, with all its atoning (v10) and eternal character. John writes this so that the people might be agents of God's great love. We too are joined with Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the community of God and we too must continue to love one another, in the many ways we have already been and more, but we do so in the power of God the Father and the name of Jesus Christ and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Not in our own strength. There is no other love like it, but if we believe, we have it and this love casts out our fears. If you feel that you have to do it all yourself, or simply feel you are by yourself, then I pray these words will be of comfort....

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision,
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

Annie Johnson Flint