

This Sermon Was Preached Via Zoom at Good Shepherd Baptist church
By Rev. Stephen Guantai
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1 John 4:7-21

Message: **“How Shall we Live in Love”**

Introduction: Hello, brothers and sisters in Christ!

It is always a privilege and joy for me to share the living Word with you.

I love the Lord as my savior, but God loved me first. And what a joy to have someone who loves us despite of all our flaws!

Prayer:

“How Shall We Live in Love”

The word “Love” is not new to any of us; it is so common that even animals know it. There is a belief among Meru people that if someone with hatred at heart comes to your house, the cat will be the first to detect it! Anyway, I digress.

Love is well known not by how many times we say it, but by how we express it.

And we can talk about love from different perspectives, but today I want us to look at what the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ, John, says about God’s Love and our Love.

Speaking to God’s children, John starts by calling on God’s children (us) John 4:7 to *“love one another because love comes from God.”* He continues to remind us that *“everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God.”* Why?

“Because God is Love” (4:8).

This is John’s matra in this text.

How can we know the depth of God’s loves to us?. One way is being by looking at what God has done and continues to do in our lives.

Speaking to the people of God, Prophet Jeremiah writes, *“The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with a loving-kindness’* (Jer 31:3). God’s love has no end. And it endures forever!

And we know He lives in us because He has given us His Holy Spirit ; who constantly whispers the Love of God to us.

God knows we are not perfect, yet He loves us anyway. And it is out of love that God sent His one and only Son Jesus Christ, as a sacrificial lamb, to save us. So, love requires sacrifice. St. Paul captures this well when he said, *“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,”* (Romans 5:8).

However, this is not good news to some people; because they want others to believe what they are saying regardless of what they are doing. Even if when what they are doing goes against God’s will.

How many times have you seen people saying I love you, yet they are intentionally doing things that hurts you?

Furthermore, if you look at the world today, you will notice that we are more easily hurt by the people we love and care about. Either as a way of revenging for something, “making a statement.” Or selfishness. And in many cases out of ignorant.

Allow me to illustrate this point: A story is told of a man who went to visit his sick wife in the hospital. When he arrived, he found out that his wife was hooked up to the oxygen machine. The oxygen tubes were connected to the machine on the wall, and there was a tube running across the floor to the bed.

When he approached the bed, he stepped on the oxygen tube. While stepping on the tube and cutting off her oxygen, he continued telling her much he loved her. Since she could not talk, she tried everything possible to tell him that he’s killing her, but he did not get it. His foot remained on the oxygen tube. Finally, when the nurse on duty heard the monitor’s beeping she rushed into the room and found out what was happening.

Think about it, and watch out and see to it that you are not stepping on someone’s oxygen tube.

It hurts to see that many people are suffering because some people are stepping on their oxygen tubes and they don’t seem to willing to move their feet!

If you look at the political arena today, many politicians are stepping on the oxygen tubes of the people they say they love by putting themselves and their political parties first. They are spending months and months debating over relief bills. while, the people they claim they love are starving, becoming homeless, and even dying, especially people of color.

Millions of lives have been turned upside down because of the various effects of COVID-19, such as loss of loved ones, unemployment, sickness e.tc. And the sad thing is, many refuse to wear masks to protect others from suffering further. Claiming their rights. That’s not right! Yet, we are all called not only to love one another but also to live in Love.

And the question is, how shall we live in love when some people are so angry with others due to election results? When some are angry with even with their friends for having different beliefs? And when individuals are threatened with death for doing the right thing? When families of color are crying because their innocent sons and daughters are being murdered in the streets? When many of their loved ones are suffering and dying in prisons for the crimes they never committed. And others cannot get decent jobs because they have been denied equal justice by the very people who says they believe in God.

How can we live in Love when some religious groups support racial discrimination by using the Bible to justify their actions?

When some people walk in the streets and cause damage to other peoples’ property?. That’s not love, that’s living in hatred!- In such cases, John, echoing the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:21-

22, reminds us that whoever hates another person is a murderer at heart! We must watch out that we are not murderers at heart.

And as beloved children of God, these are the questions among many more we must be asking ourselves as we walk this journey of faith in Jesus Christ. Because living in love is the only way to live in peace. *Whoever lives in Love lives in God and God lives in them . That way, love is made complete among us.* says John.(v17)

When we live in love, we will not worry about which party wins, as long as the person who is elected into office is honestly living in love and acting in Love. Treating all people as beloved children of God.

Today, in the name of our loving God, as we celebrate birth of the king of peace Jesus Christ' birth; I'm calling all people of around the world to try and live in love.

Because When we live in love, there will be no need for making dangerous weapons of mass destruction to harm other people and destroy God's creation.

When we live in love, we do not fear other people who are not like us. John continues to remind us that *"there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment."* He continues to say that *"the one who fears is not made perfect in love."* (4:18).

In this context, I should say that whenever there is fear, there is something wrong somewhere. In most cases, it has to do with people doing something wrong to others and they fear that the people they have wronged might react to what has been done to them. So they will create a sense of fear, create systems that will favor and protect them; because they know their actions are questionable. But they forget that one day they will stand before their creator and give an account of their lives.

Real love is an action, not a feeling. And the greatest love is shown by caring for all of God's people; respecting who they are, regardless of where they came from or and how they look like or their religious beliefs. If we can live by these principles, we will be living in real and true love!

Her book, *Listening to the language of the Bible , hearing It Through Jesus' Ear* , Lois Tverberg wrote, "Jesus's words to "love your neighbor as yourself," are an outstanding law for our lives; but even this teaching will be enriched when we learn about it in its context...The understanding is, that if we know that we are just as guilty of sin as our neighbors are, we realize that we cannot hate them for their sins."

She continues on to say "We should not lose the traditional understanding that we really should love others as much as we do ourselves, but we should also realize that the time we show the most Love is not when people are easy to love, but when they are unlovable. Then, we

must forgive them, realizing that they are just like us.” (127-128). And I believe this will give us confidence when we will all stand before our creator God and give an account of our lives.

Therefore, “We must discover the power of Love, the power, the redemptive power of Love. Moreover, when we discover that Love, we will make the old world a new world. We will be able to make people better. Love is the only way”.says the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Sisters and brother in Christ, God, who is Love, is calling us to discover that Love is in Jesus Christ. In a few days, we’re going to celebrate His birthday. So, in the words of St. Paul, “*Let’s all that we do be done in love*” (Cor 16:14).

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, again, in the word of St. Paul, “*May, the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else*” (1The 3:12) as it flows from God to us.
Peace and Grace of God be with. **Amen.**

MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERY EVERYONE !