

62-04-01.wpd—The Anatomy of True Love

love, needs, caring, agape, eros

1 John 4:7-11

God's love meets our needs and moves us beyond them.

INTRODUCTION: (**text** read as Scripture reading)

—The Valentine's Day symbol is a *heart*: the symbol used for the word "love" ["I 'heart' you!" "You always 'heart' the one you love."] Silly pun, but the real phrase (with 'hurt') is often true. Why? Because love can be selfishly dominated by our own neediness. That why the **Title**....

—In C. S. Lewis' intro to *The Four Loves*: "need" love is the usual definition, but "gift" love is rooted in God ("God is love"— **HOM.idea**)

I. Needing is Not Nasty!

A. Our need for love is not mere selfishness, unless it's overindulged.

B. Needing to be loved is part of God's blessing on humanity:

1. The human condition: it's "not good that man should live alone."
2. Our 'need' love draws us to God, Who can meet those needs:
 - a. *OT*—Psa 81:10, I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill **it**. (Our soul's hunger)
 - b. *NT*—Mat 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Our need for refreshment from weariness)
3. We approach God from a sense of need: He's *full*, we're *empty*; He's *sovereign*, we're *dependent*; He's *righteous*, we're *sinful*; He's *powerful*, we're *weak*; He's *wise*, we're *often foolish*.

C. It's part of our journey, part of being who we are:

1. We're *human* because made in God's image (no choice about it)
2. But having free will, means acting like God's image is voluntary.
3. Our need is obvious: we can't image our Maker independently.
 - a. We fail to be truly human by choosing independence from God (The Incarnation [God becoming human] wasn't to show us how to be like God [Satan's deception] but how to be true *humans*, real *images of God*, who personally reflect His love.)
 - b. Our need is to obey Christ's command: "*Follow Me*," but we can't do that, unless He indwells us through the Holy Spirit.

TRANS: *Need love is not nasty*. It draws us to our ultimate need of a

vital relationship with God. But it's not the *true love* the Apostle John speaks of in our **text**. In fact, it can turn sour...

II. Loving Can Become Nasty

- A. "*God is love*," but not the reverse: "love is God" [**Denis Rougement**: "Love ceases to be a demon only when it ceases to be a god."] (stated another way: "*Love becomes a demon when it becomes a god*.")
- B. Human love becomes nasty, when it usurps God's authority—
 - a. 'Need' loves can become idols through greed or selfishness.
 - b. This is obvious in the jealousy of erotic love, but can also be true of *family love, friendships, or patriotic love*.
- C. "*Love is God*" is wrong! While 'gift' loves bear resemblance to God the Giver, selfish human love can turn them into false gods:
 1. "A love for the Fatherland" led Nazi Germany into exalting their national destiny above the lives of their neighbors.
 2. Maternal possessiveness might ask, "*Haven't I been a model, loving mother? How can my children show me such neglect?*"

TRANS: In C. S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*, a mother, Pam, visiting Heaven from Hell, is invited to come in by a friend, but first demands to see her son, Michael:

"If [God] loved me He'd let me see my boy. If He loved me why did He take away Michael from me? I wasn't going to say anything about that. But it's pretty hard to forgive, you know."

"But He had to take Michael away. Partly for Michael's sake. . . ."

"I'm sure I did my best to make Michael happy. I gave up my whole life. . . ."

"Human beings can't make one another really happy for long. And secondly, for your sake. He wanted your merely instinctive love for your child... to turn into something better. He wanted you to love Michael as He understands love. You cannot love a fellow-creature fully till you love God. Sometimes this conversion can be done while the instinctive love is still gratified. But there was, it seems, no chance of that in your case.... The only remedy was to take away its object. It was a case for surgery. When that first kind of love was thwarted, then there was just a chance that in the loneliness, in the silence, something else might begin to grow."

"This is all nonsense--cruel and wicked nonsense.... Mother-love.... is the highest and holiest feeling in human nature."

"Pam, Pam--no natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves. They are all holy when God's hand is on the rein. They all go bad when they set up on their own and make themselves into false gods."

"My love for Michael would never have gone bad. Not if we'd lived together for millions of years."

"You are mistaken. And you must know. Haven't you met--down there--mothers

who have their sons with them, in Hell? Does their love make them happy?"

"If you mean people like the Guthrie woman and her dreadful Bobby, of course not.... Don't you dare to suggest that Michael could ever become like the Guthrie boy. There are some things I won't stand."

"What you have seen in the Guthries is what natural affection turns to in the end if it will not be converted."

"It's a lie. A wicked, cruel lie. How could anyone love their son more than I did? Haven't I lived only for his memory all these years?"

"That was rather a mistake, Pam. In your heart of hearts you know it was."

—C. S. Lewis was capturing what mother-love could become without...

III. The Meeting of Need-Love by Gift-Love

A. It's "not good to be alone," but can we live with other needy people? (Needs hurt, when unfulfilled: they can harm ourselves & others, because humans don't meet our deepest need for need-fulfilment.)

B. God's love alone meets our needs...

1. v.8, *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.* [Recall the pop song: "What the world needs now is love, sweet love..."] [Here's a logical syllogism: "We need love; God is love; therefore, we need God!"]
2. v.9-10. *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.* (Needing isn't the problem; we need the sin taken out of our needing; only God's sacrificial gift in Christ can do that.)

C. God's love meets our needs... and moves us beyond them...

1. v.11, *Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* (God didn't plan for life to run on need-loves, but on gift-love.)
2. v.7, *...let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.* — What's the secret of true love?
 - a. **True love** is really gift-love and only "comes from God."
 - b. **True love** begins by being "born of God." [What about loving people who reject God's love? Making human love an idol that pushes away love's Creator is a catastrophe more tragic than lust, because, it's more blinding.]
 - c. **True love** "knows God" (knows its Source) and it grows stronger by knowing God more and more intimately, through Christ.

CONCLUSION: Jesus came to show us God's love and to show us how to love. "God is love," and because we're made in Love's image, our true humanity is fulfilled by loving and serving others. So, let's let God meet our need-love and move us beyond it to gift-love for others.

1 John 4:7-11 (NIV)

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9, This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

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.

11, Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.