

Easter 7
May 13, 2018

1 John 4:13-21
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We Trust God's Love for Us

- I. God's love is our salvation.
- II. God's love is our confidence.
- III. God's love is our motive to love.

Dear Christian friends,

Today we have come again into **God's** house. WHO – WHAT is God? God is a **“spirit.”** He is a real Person but He has NO BODY. God is triune. He is THREE separate and **distinct** Persons but He is ONLY ONE God. **Don't** even try to figure that out! God is eternal – He has no beginning or end – He ALWAYS IS. God is almighty – **all-knowing** – **everywhere**. God is holy – **pure** – **sinless** – **perfect** in every way. God is righteous – He ALWAYS DOES what is right and good. God is faithful – He ALWAYS KEEPS His Word. God is all that – AND as John reminds us here – **“God is love.”**

That fact is the FOUNDATION of our Christian faith and our personal relationship with God. **“We trust the love that God has for us,”** John wrote here. WE TRUST GOD'S LOVE for 1)our salvation, 2)our confidence and 3)our motive to love.

I. God's love is our salvation.

“We have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.” THAT is the heart of the **gospel** and our **Christian faith**. That is what we have been celebrating this **first half** of the church year with Advent – Christmas – Epiphany – Lent – Easter – Ascension Day. Look again at what God IN LOVE has all done for us! That Baby in the manger is the eternal Son of God born our **flesh-and-blood** Brother. Look at that perfect life Jesus lived in our place. NEVER ONCE did Jesus disobey or disrespect Mary or Joseph. They weren't PERFECT PARENTS but Jesus still gave them perfect love, obedience and respect. **Never once** did Jesus gossip – curse – drink too much – make fun of anyone. Jesus obeyed His heavenly Father EVEN TO DYING on the cross in our place. Look at Jesus' empty grave – His ascension into heaven – His promise to send the Holy Spirit. ALL THAT is the proof of **“the love that God has for us.”** We build our **Christian faith** and **hope** – we build our relationship with God – **not on** FUZZY FEELINGS or popular opinions but on the BIBLICAL FACTS of God's love for us.

We **“trust God's love”** for our salvation. **Many** people think God's love means that God is a **wishy-washy** PUSH-OVER. Because “God is love” they think God is TOO NICE to send anyone to **eternal punishment** in hell. They foolishly forget that God HAS SAID He **will do just** that. They conveniently forget that God is HOLY and **just** – that God will **“not be mocked”** or ignored. God gave us His commandments EXPECTING us to **obey** them – perfectly ALL the time – FROM OUR HEARTS. God never took back the words, **“the soul that sins, it shall die.”** IN JUSTICE God could rightly send us to hell for **how we've treated** Him. But IN LOVE God **“sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.”** In Jesus' perfect life we have the RIGHTEOUSNESS to **stand acceptable** in God's sight. In Jesus' shed blood and innocent death on the cross we have God's FORGIVENESS of all our sins. In Jesus' empty grave we have God's PROMISE of eternal life in heaven. We TRUST IN JESUS and what He in love has all done for our **salvation**.

“We have seen and testify” to this John wrote. God's love for us in Jesus is THE MESSAGE of the Bible. The Bible was written **“that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in His name.”** FROM THE BIBLE – the Bible alone! – we learn that Jesus is God's Son and our **perfect Savior**. NOW we as individual Christians – as a church, school, member of the Wisconsin Synod – we too testify to **“the love God has for us”** in Jesus. God has put you and me RIGHT HERE **right now to share** His love with others. God made us MEMBERS of **families to share** His love with our **children** and **relatives**. God gave us NEIGHBORS to share His

love with them. God gave us JOBS **not just** to make money **but also** to share His love with our co-workers. God's love and forgiveness in Jesus are FOR ALL people.

Trusting in Jesus unites us with God. ***"If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God."*** NO ONE will be saved without faith in Jesus as his Savior. EVERYONE who trusts in Jesus ***"will be saved."***

II. God's love is our confidence.

TRUSTING ***"the love that God has for us"*** in Jesus ***"we may have confidence on the day of judgment."*** Last Thursday was **Ascension Day**. **40 days** after Easter Jesus led His disciples outside of Jerusalem – commissioned them to ***"preach the gospel"*** to all nations – promised them the help of the Holy Spirit – and **then with His hands lifted up** to bless them Jesus ascended into heaven. Jesus returned to His heavenly Father with His MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. Jesus has taken care of all that was necessary for our forgiveness and eternal life. **Now** Jesus SITS ***"at God's right hand"*** ruling this world **for the good** of His Church. AND we have Jesus' promise to **come again** in glory TO JUDGE the living and the dead.

Are YOU READY to stand before God on that day? Are you ready to die and ***"face the judgment"***? TRUSTING in God's love in Jesus we are ready! We are eagerly awaiting that day. Trusting in Jesus we ALREADY KNOW what that day will bring us. We have Jesus' priceless promise, ***"In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with Me, so that you may also be where I am."*** Clinging to Jesus we already know what we will hear on that day, ***"Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."***

"There is no fear in love, but complete love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment." TRUSTING in God's love in Jesus we are not afraid of Judgment Day. Oh, if we had to face God ON OUR OWN we'd have plenty of reasons to be afraid. There's no way we could DENY or EXCUSE our sins. There's no way we could avoid the ETERNAL DEATH SENTENCE of hell. But thank God that IN HIS LOVE we **have Jesus!** Jesus is THE ONLY REASON we can confidently look forward to Judgment Day. **In Jesus** we have God's forgiveness of all our sins. **On the Last Day Jesus** is coming to TAKE US HOME to heaven with Him.

III. God's love is our motive to love.

NOW we are waiting for that day. **Now** is our time to testify and share with others God's love in Jesus. ***"You will be My witnesses,"*** Jesus told us before He ascended into heaven. We do that with WORDS. We also do that with our DAILY LIVES. TRUSTING in God's love in Jesus for our salvation and **confidence** – that love also motivates us to love.

"We love because He first loved us." Love is AT THE HEART of our relationship with God. GOD LOVES US. God loved us FIRST – BEFORE we had done anything to **earn** or **deserve** God's love. God's love FOR US leads us to LOVE GOD. **God's love** for us MOTIVATES us to want to worship God **faithfully** and diligently study His Word. **God's love** for us leads us to **want to** "THANK AND PRAISE, serve and obey" God **in all** we do. **For us Christians** our motivation is NOT FEAR – not PRAISE or **honor** – not recognition or **appreciation** – but LOVE – GOD'S love for us and OUR love for God. The best way to **get Christians** to DO GOD'S WILL – to strive to live **pure** and **holy** lives – to get involved in **God's work** at church – to rearrange their **morals** and **priorities** to LINE UP with God's will – is not to lay a GUILT TRIP on them but to TAKE ANOTHER TRIP to Jesus' cross and empty grave. ***"Christ's love compels us,"*** Paul told the Corinthian Christians. ***"He (Jesus) died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for Him, who died in their place and was raised again."*** Or as Paul told the Roman Christians, ***"I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of***

God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice — holy and pleasing to God — which is your appropriate worship.”

God's love for us SHAPES our relationships with other people – and especially our **fellow Christians**. Paul told the Thessalonian Christians, **“Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.”** John emphasizes that we CAN'T SEPARATE our love FOR GOD from our love for OTHER people. **“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, love God, whom he has not seen? This then is the command we have from Him: The one who loves God should also love his brother.”** If a **Christian** refuses to love and forgive someone – if a **Christian** hates someone or carries a grudge – that Christian is JEOPARDIZING **his relationship** with God and DENYING his **faith**. To TRUST in **God's love** for us but to REFUSE TO SHOW that **same love** to others is impossible – GOD SAYS so! God not only SHOWERS His **forgiving love** on us He also commands us TO SOW that **same love** to others.

Is God asking the IMPOSSIBLE? **Some people** may have really hurt us so much. How can we just FORGIVE AND FORGET that? We have our **sinful natures**. If we look within ourselves for the ABILITY TO LOVE and forgive we won't find it. We TRUST IN **God's love** for us to motivate and help us to **love** and **forgive**. The more we focus on HOW GOD **loves** us and HOW MUCH **God forgives** us – THE MORE we will be able to love and **forgive** each other. The more we focus on JESUS' CROSS and empty grave INSTEAD OF on what others have done to us THE MORE we will be able to love and **forgive**.

“We have come to know and trust the love that God has for us.” WHAT LOVE God has lavished on us. The best way to THANK God for that love is to TRUST IN **God's love** for our salvation – our confidence – our motivation to love. Amen.

APOSTLES' CREED