

What Transforms the World

1 John 4:7-21

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 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. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

What Transforms the World

What is love?

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.

Love is action.

Love has feeling.

Love is selfless while being fully yourself.

I doubt we can really grasp the mystery of what love is.

But we can come into relationship with the one who embodies this power.

God.

John has a singular message.

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How do we know we are in Christ?

The mark of a person who knows God is loving one another.

That is all.

But Why this message?

17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

Because following Jesus is hard.

One who follows Jesus must indeed live counter to sinful human nature.

The gospel is not say the prayer, get saved and go to heaven.

In fact, apart from the prayer of confession that is a part of salvation,

getting saved and going to heaven has little or nothing to do with the gospel.

The Gospel is about union with Christ and his Kingdom.

It Addresses Evil

18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

This message in fact goes to the very heart of human existence and behaviour.

It answers the question of evil very clearly.

Where does evil come from?

The opposite of love is not hate.

Perhaps it is fear or doubt.

These things cause a host of issues on their heels.

But the opposite of love might not something at all - it is the lack of something.

It is the lack of love.

It is a void.

A vacuum and a hunger.

Blaise Pascal famously wrote, "In every heart is a God-shaped vacuum that he alone can fill."

You see, the human heart grows crooked for want of love.

How can a person love without ever being loved?

Love Changes Us

11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He

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And that is what 1 John is about.

It is about how God changes the world in us and then through us.

It starts here.

Right here.

The love of Jesus changes us.

His forgiveness shatters our fear and pride.

We begin to turn to him and his Spirit comes to us.

And he makes us like him.

Note that I said that *he* makes us like him.

We don't make ourselves like him.

The Secret of Transformation

19 We love because he first loved us.

But John has unlocked a secret in how God transforms us.

He reveals a power we are given.

You see, God changes us through indirection.

We are given the power to heal each other.

God uses the broken to heal the broken.

And that is why the cross.

Why we have a humble king.

Love is greater than sin, greater than hate, greater even than death.

It is when understood, that mysterious thing we call love is no longer a concept.

Love is always about a person.

Antidote to Sin

20 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. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

You may have heard it said, "No people, no problem."

This flows from the idea that evil and pain proceed from human beings.

I cannot disagree.

But I think John would add this - From God comes healing, wholeness and love.

This is places into those who would be his.

And they in turn can and will share this with each other and the whole world.

Sin is viral, inherited, and contagious.

But we have the antidote if we are willing to use it.

An Exercise: Beginning to Love

1. Mutual Observation - You must see someone to love them. So look upon each other with wonder.

Find a partner - only one.

One of you will spend 3 minutes observing the other. - It requires courage.

The other will have their eyes closed and let you observe them. - It requires trust.

Nothing is to be said.

At the end of the three minutes the observer is to face the observed and say,

"You are wonderfully and fearfully made."

To which the response will be, "Thank you."

Now change places and repeat.

2. Sharing the experience

3. Mutual Prayer - You pray for those you love.

Now say a prayer for the other person - you have 2 minutes each.

You may pray for them silently or out loud.

Blessing

Forgiveness - for them to forgive others and to be forgiven

Needs

Peace

This is the Character of God

Because bar nothing, this is the very heart of God's character.

Forgiveness

Grace

Humility

Compassion

Understanding

Acceptance

Safety

Honesty

Kindness

Patience

Loyalty