

**Fil-Am Community Church**

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**A GOD WHO LOVES ME**

*“The Lord said ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with loving kindness.’” (Jeremiah 31:3)*

Good morning! Last week, we finished the series “What Kind of Church is This?” Today, I’d like to follow it up with “What Kind of God is He?” And after this series, I’m thinking of calling the next series “What Kind of Pastor is Rolly?” On second thought, maybe not. I might get a lot of protests. You might stop coming.

So, this is the first message in our 3-part series called “What Kind of God is He?” This morning, to kick it off, I’d like to talk about a God who loves me and you. I’d like to talk about the beauty and wonder of God’s personal love. Which is why this message is entitled “A God Who Loves Me.”

Now, the truth is, everyone has a desperate need to be loved. Desperately inside, we are screaming out “Love me.” Some of you may not want to admit it but it is a deep need to be loved. Like this girl who broke up an engagement with her boyfriend but makes a turn-around and sends a text to her former boyfriend:  
Dearest Johnny,  
No words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you'll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you! Yours forever,  
Marie.

P.S. And congratulations on winning the state lottery.

One thing we must understand is that many people, like that girl, are looking

for love at the wrong places. We have greatly misunderstood love. We think that we can be loved only by a person who we can touch and feel.

The misunderstanding that we have is that many of us don't fully understand that God's love is personal for us. We've heard it before: God's love is big. God's love is universal. But is it personal? The Bible boldly proclaims there is only one love in the universe that has what it takes to meet this love-starved world. And it's God's love.

Jeremiah 31:3 says, *"The Lord said 'I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have drawn you with loving kindness.'"* Some of you wonder why you're at Fil-Am. You wonder why you came today. It's because God's love is drawing you to Him. God loves you very deeply and He wants you to know it today.

There are a lot of deep needs that we have but to be loved hits at a very basic human need. Your greatest need is not money. Your greatest need is not success. Your greatest need is not fame. Your greatest need is not another job. **Your greatest need is to be loved.** Not sentimental love, not sexual love, but God's love. And because we so desperately want to be loved, we're willing to do desperate things to get love. Like the son who wants to achieve something great, maybe graduate at the top of his class because he wants to get his dad's approval. Or like the girl who puts on make-up in order to get the attention of her crush. We do desperate things to get love. But they all fall short.

That's where God's love is so different. God's love says, "There is no limit." In Ephesians 3, Paul says, *"I pray that you may be able to feel and understand how long, how wide, how deep and how high His love really is and to experience this love for yourself."* (Ephesians 3:17-19 TLB)

Have you experienced God's love in your own life? Have you experienced

that God loves you, really, really loves you on your good days? And God loves you, really, really loves you on your bad days? Why? Because that's all God can do. The Bible tells us that "*God is love.*" (1 John 4:16 NIV)

Now, how does God love you? How does God love me? Let me count the ways. Of course, there are so many ways that God loves you and me. But let me give you just four this morning. Otherwise, we'll spend the rest of the afternoon and the evening here talking about the hundreds of ways that God loves you and me.

So, going back to our message, first, how does God love me?

### **1. GOD LOVES ME WHETHER I WANT HIM TO OR NOT**

You have a lot of choices to make in life. You can choose your spouse, your occupation, where you are going to live, and a whole, long list of other things.

But the one thing you cannot choose is whether God is going to love you or not. You really have no say in the matter. You can choose not to love Him back if you want, but you can't make God not love you. It's impossible. The Bible tells us that God's very nature is love. "*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*" – **Psalm 103:8 (ESV)**

Love isn't just something God does – love is something God is! You can try to run away from it, you can try to ignore it, and you can try to argue against it if you want, but God will still love you, because He is love and He does love.

Psalm 145 says, "*The Lord is loving toward all He has made.*" "All" includes you and me. Now, God's love for us is not based on whether we respond to it or not. God is love. It's unconditional. No strings attached. The big idea is that God would love us as if there were only one of us to love. But, when God is loving me right now He does not stop loving you. That's the way it works.

Parents, you know how when you're videotaping your kids, maybe on stage

with other kids or something like that and you zoom in just on your kid. You just want to see your kid. That's what God does with each of us.

1 Peter 5:7 (TLB) "*He is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you.*" God loves you. He knows you. He knows your pain.

He knows your past. He knows exactly what's going on in your life. Because he is not an impersonal God. He is not like the Hindu god or the Muslim god who is detached, who doesn't care about your personal needs and wants. Matthew 10:30 says, "*God even knows how many hairs are on your head.*" Or how many are left. Even how many gray hairs I have. How much personal can you get more than that? God loves me even when I want him to or not.

The second way that God loves me is that

## **2. GOD LOVES ME EVEN WHEN I HAVE REJECTED HIM**

I cannot begin to tell you how many people I have talked to, that do not believe God could possibly love them, based on the lifestyle they have lived. They think they have sinned too often, or too severely to be forgiven. They have judged themselves into an eternity without God because they refuse to believe that God could love them enough to forgive them for the terrible things they have done.

Yet the Bible says: "*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" – **Romans 5:8 (ESV)**

Notice that this does not say that God shows His love for us after we have repented, or after we have turned our lives around. It says that He loved us "*while we were STILL sinners.*" God loves you in the midst of your sinful lifestyle. That doesn't mean He agrees with what you are doing, but that He loves you in spite of it.

Think of the Apostle Paul. Before his conversion he was traveling around gathering up Christians and having them killed. When we think of horrible sins we

probably think of cheating on our spouse, stealing, assault, drugs, and things like that. But in Paul's case we had a man who had pledged to round up the people of God and murder them, and that is exactly what he did.

And do you know what? God forgave Paul.

He loved Him so much that he was willing to love him, while he was still a sinner. He accepted his repentance for all the many things he had done wrong. And God even used him to spread his Word in a powerful way throughout the world.

Have you sinned worse than Paul? Have you gone on a killing spree? I doubt it very much. But even if you have, God still loves you. There is nothing that you have done or can do that will remove you from God's love, because God IS love.

I have shared with you many times in the past how I have turned away from God, rejected him because I thought he didn't care for me. I hope you wouldn't get tired of hearing it because I'm going to share with you a little bit of it again. Well, I became a Christian in college but soon after, I suffered personal setbacks and that resulted in my wasting my education, my getting fired from my job in Australia, and sinking into depression. I blamed God for all my troubles and decided to become an agnostic and later on, an atheist. How could I love a God who heaped troubles upon me? By the way, most atheists become one because of a suffering they experienced or seeing a loved one suffer or just seeing suffering in the world. Now, God didn't stop loving me even though I stopped loving him. He, in fact, found ways to show me his love for me.

Like, the time a radio station in Australia sponsored a contest and I won a Yamaha CD component player and the complete Beatles' anthology. Or the time when God arranges circumstances so that I met "accidentally" in a train in the morning and then in the evening a lady in the church who I secretly hated and because of our conversation in the train my heart melted. Or the time I was so

worried because I didn't have money to pay for my tuition for my missionary training but someone called to send me money the night before I was to leave for school. These and others more gradually softened my heart and made me realize that God's love for me is deep and his grace is strong.

Afterwards, I wrote a song about my experience which I entitled "By Your Grace Alone, I Stand." And I'd like to share it with you. Romans 5:1-2 says, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."*

The third way that God shows me his love is that

### **3. GOD LOVES ME AND HAS OFFERED UNDENIABLE PROOF**

Vietnam veteran and Air Force Colonel John Mansur tells about an eight-year-old orphan girl who was wounded after a misdirected mortar attack. An American Navy doctor and nurse were called. They surmised that the little girl would die if a blood transfusion did not take place. A quick test showed that neither American had the correct type, but several of the uninjured orphans did.

The doctor spoke some pidgin Vietnamese, and the nurse a smattering of high-school French. Using that combination, together with much impromptu sign language, they tried to explain to their young, frightened audience that unless they could replace some of the girl's lost blood, she would certainly die. Then they asked if anyone would be willing to give blood to help.

Their request was met with wide-eyed silence. After several long moments, a small hand slowly and waveringly went up, dropped back down, and then went up again.

"Oh, thank you," the nurse said in French. "What is your name?" "Heng," came the reply.

Heng was quickly laid on a pallet, his arm swabbed with alcohol, and a needle inserted in his vein. Through this ordeal Heng lay stiff and silent. After a moment, he let out a shuddering sob, quickly covering his face with his free hand. His occasional sobs gave way to steady, silent crying, his eyes screwed tightly shut, his fist in his mouth to stifle his sobs.

The medical team was concerned. Something was obviously very wrong. At this point, a Vietnamese nurse arrived to help. Seeing the little one's distress, she spoke to him rapidly in Vietnamese, listened to his reply and answered him in a soothing voice.

After a moment, the patient stopped crying and looked questioningly at the Vietnamese nurse. When she nodded, a look of great relief spread over his face. Glancing up, the nurse said quietly to the Americans, "He thought he was dying. He misunderstood you. He thought you had asked him to give all his blood so the little girl could live."

"But why would he be willing to do that?" asked the Navy nurse. The Vietnamese nurse repeated the question to the little boy, who answered simply, "She's my friend."

*"By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."* – **1 John 3:16 (ESV)**

*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* – **1 John 4:9-10 (ESV)**

Jesus' willingness to go to the Cross and lay down His life on our behalf is all the proof that we need that God loves us. Who would do such a thing for

someone they did not love? Especially for people like us who had rejected Him, and sinned against Him, and chosen to live our lives in independence from Him?

Finally, God shows his love for us in this way.

#### **4. GOD LOVES ME TOO MUCH TO LEAVE ME THE WAY I AM**

As we've learned, God loves you whether you have come to Him and accepted Jesus as your Savior or not. His love is not dependent on your response. His love is dependent on His own nature.

That being said, you need to know that God doesn't want you to stay the way you are. Changing is not a condition to receive His love, but it is a response to the love He has offered you. God wants you to be the person He has created you to be. He wants you to have a good life, and make a positive impact on the world around you.

Once a woman was caught in the act of adultery. The religious leaders wanted to stone her to death for her sin and were getting ready to do just that. Jesus said that anyone who had never sinned should throw the first stone at her, and then he bent down and wrote in the sand. We pick up the story there:

*“Jesus stood up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.’” – John 8:10-11 (ESV)*

Notice that Jesus did not ignore her sin. He didn't say, “What you're doing is okay and I have no problem with it.” He loved her too much to leave her the way that she was. He said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

And that's the message He gives to each of us. He loves us. He loves us in our sin, in our doubt, in our rejection, and even when we are running away from Him. But He loves us too much to leave us that way. When we accept Him as our

Lord and Savior He says, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

You hear about this type of love. **How do I respond to God’s love?** This is an awesome gift. How do I respond to it? What do I do with this as we walk out of here?

**1. I Receive God’s love.** It’s a gift. Just receive it. Some people have a hard time doing that. They say, “I’m not worthy of that type of love. How can God love someone like me?” But God doesn’t say, “Clean up your act first and then come to Me.” God says, “Come to Me. Just as you are. Receive it!”

The Bible says in John 1:12 *“But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave them the right to become children of God.”* You have to believe and accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Many people believe in Jesus. But they believe him only in their minds. They believe that he existed and that he was a teacher and a prophet. But they don’t accept him in their hearts. They don’t accept the fact that Jesus died for their sins and rose from the dead to give them eternal life. I hope you’re ready to believe and accept Jesus if you haven’t yet.

After we receive God’s love the second thing I ought to do is....

**2. Refill myself with God’s love.** Daily. One thing that Anabel and I really like about Virginia is that many fast food stores here like McDonald’s have refillable drinks. You don’t see that much in New Jersey and New York. I guess they just don’t trust people there. Here, they give you a cup and they don’t care who refills it or for how long you refill it.

So, we’re really thankful that this is where God placed us. Anyway, I imagine my life as a refillable cup. You see, as I share my cup with others, like Anabel and Ally and Eze and Eza, my cup goes empty and I have to refill it. My life is just like that. It can go on empty as I share my love with others. Because sharing love by

serving others can sometimes be exhausting, tiring. Sometimes, you don't get it back. At other times, you get back something that you don't deserve. So, where do I go? To the refilling machine which is God. But unlike a refilling machine, God's love never runs dry.

All I need to do is to run and put my refillable cup under his love.

If you've been a Christian for a while, do you know when your cup is empty? I don't care what size it is. Small, medium, large. It will go empty sooner or later. Have you come to that discernment and understanding in your life when you need to be refilled? John 15:9 (TLB) says *"I have loved you even as the Father has loved Me. Live within My love."*

You say, "How do you do it?" "How do you live within his love?" For me – and we're all wired differently so what works for me may not work for you but it may give you some ideas:

1) I have to have some of God's word wash my heart. I have to. It's the way that it works. I don't read books of the Bible every day. But I make it a point to read a chapter everyday as soon as I wake up in the morning. Read your Bible. This is one of the ways that God communicates to us.

2) One of the other things I do is journal. I write letters to God, prayers to God. I write also about the things that have happened in my life noting the times that God showed up in a special way. You can see my blog on our web site which my wife posts on Facebook. I know I don't write often but will try to be more prolific. But when I'm feeling dry, I re-read my blogs and they refresh me.

3) In my car, I have Christian CD's. I play them whenever I get tired of 91.9 WGTS. Listening to 91.9 calms my spirit. I feel God's love through music.

4) At home, I use my guitar to sing praises to God. You can use that too. Or the piano. Or your karaoke machine. Or sing with the accompaniment of Christian

CD's. We better start practicing here as we'll be singing praises to God for all eternity. God's love fills me after about three or four songs. I just don't know what it does to my neighbor.

That's what I have to do to refill myself with God's love. How does your cup get filled?

### **3. Reflect God's love to others.**

Jesus says, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" Jesus is saying give your love away. People are dying for love. Give it away. Give it to somebody today and then watch. You'll sense God's love. Sometimes you don't feel it but most of the time you'll feel the exhilaration of giving love away. When I was in Russia as a missionary and ministering to kids and teens over there, at the end of the day, even tho' I felt tired, I still felt good. I don't know how it works in God's grand economy of things. It's one of the questions I'm going to ask Him. "I gave love away. Why did I feel it?" That's just how it works.

If you've been listening to 91.9, you must have heard them talking about sharing your love with others anonymously. What they challenge you to do is to pay for somebody's food in a drive-thru or toll booth and ask you to write to them through their web site or call them about your experience. Then they air on the radio your experience. It's just a blessing to listen to that. That's one way of giving your love away. Serving others.

There's a God in heaven who loves you and His love has your name on it. Whether you like it or not, whether you deserve it or not, He's crazy about you. Why don't you get crazy about him? Then experience the greatness of his love.