

Today is an important day in the life and witness of the Cathedral as we have begun our Annual General Meeting with this worship service. It is a time when we look back on the year that has gone by to give thanks to God for his faithfulness in all that we have been able to accomplish. This morning our theme reminds us that, "God is love, and we can only know him if we ourselves show love to others." The most important thing for any community to work in harmony is the ingredient of love. Love is the binding factor that keeps us all together. Jesus himself washes the feet of his disciples and then gave them a new command saying, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." So Jesus affirms that the hallmark of a disciple of Jesus is love for one another. What is this love that Jesus is talking about? And how do we as a church show that we are his disciples?

What is love? And what motivates our love? C. S. Lewis in his book 'Four Loves' talks about four different kinds of love that human beings practice. The first is what he calls as 'Storge' - 'affection'. This affection is seen as the fondness between members of the family who have otherwise found themselves together by chance. The second type of love is what he terms as 'Philia' - 'brotherly love'. It is a love between friends who are like brothers e.g. David and Johnathan in the bible. A third kind of love is what he calls as 'Eros' - 'romantic love'. For Lewis this was love in the sense of 'being in love' or 'loving someone', as opposed to the raw sexuality which he calls as Venus. Finally, he talks about God's love - the 'Agape' love or an unconditional love. This love is a self-sacrificial love regardless of the circumstances. Lewis recognises this as a greatest of loves and sees it specifically as Christian love. This love is not a form of natural affection, but a super-natural fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22). It is a matter of the will rather than feeling.

John in his letter reminds the Christian community that everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. God is the source of love and if we know God we are called to love others as we love ourselves. John clearly states that whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. Our knowledge of God is directly linked to the way we love others. If we do not love our neighbours then we really do not know God. How do we fare as the Cathedral family? Do we truly love one another or do we turn our faces away when we see some people. If we love God then our love should be visible to our neighbours.

God has revealed his love to us by sending his only Son Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. God did this while we were still sinners. Because of what Jesus has done on the cross for us we have the possibility of the forgiveness of sins and life eternal. Jesus offers us life and life abundant through his death and resurrection. Paul tells us that we are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. God has paved the way for us through his Son Jesus but we are to appropriate that way.

John calls his readers and us to love one another because God has loved us. God's love is revealed through his Son Jesus. The New Testament constantly speaks of the love of God in terms of relationships with his people, as we gather together for worship, as we pray for one another and as we participate in the Lord's Supper together. This love is not possible by our own strength and God has given us the gift of his Holy Spirit to reside within us that we may truly love others.

Christian love is the expression of us remaining in God and his love being revealed through our life styles. The world will truly believe in Christ if they see us loving one another. May God truly help us to love one another as he has loved us.