

Pastor Writes

Greetings to you all as we continue in this Easter Season. This morning we meditate on the theme 'God is love and we can only know him if we ourselves show love to others.' If God is love then we need to understand what this word 'love' means. What do we normally think of when we use the word love? Is it just a feeling? Or is it an action? Or an emotion? Or something more than that? C.S Lewis in his book 'Four Loves' talks about four different types of love. The first is what he calls as 'affection' (*storge*). This affection is seen as a fondness through familiarity, especially between members of the family who have otherwise found themselves together by chance. The second type is what he terms as- brotherly love (*philia*), a love between friends who are like brothers. It is the strong bond existing between people who share common interest or activity. Thirdly, he talks about romantic love (*eros*) in the sense of 'being in love' or 'loving someone'. Finally, he talks about God's love (*agape*) an unconditional love. This love of God is a self-sacrificial love regardless of the circumstances.

In John's letter that was read this morning he reminds us that we need to love one another because love comes from God. The source of love is God himself and without him there can be no love experienced. C. S Lewis shows that the natural loves are not self-sufficient and therefore one needs to be filled with God's *agape* love. John says that everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. For John, love is the test to know whether we have truly been born again and have become the children of God. His argument is that if we claim to know God then it should reflect in our love for one another. John tells us that the reverse is also true, that if we do not love one another then we do not know God. So the key test for knowing God or not knowing God is whether we love one another or not.

John then goes on to talk about God' love. God showed his love for us by sending his one and only Son Jesus into the world so that we may have eternal life. God's love is life affirming. John reminds us that this is not reciprocal love. We did not love God, but God loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Real love is sacrificial love. In the letter to the Romans, Paul shows that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But he goes on to say, 'they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus' (Rom 3:23-26). Atonement is the action of making amends for the wrongs committed. God in Jesus Christ has made amends for all our wrong doings by sending his Son to die for us where we had to die.

John then challenges his congregation and says that, 'we too should love one another as God has loved us'. He says that 'if we love one another then God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.' The supreme example of *agape* love is the cross. We too are called to walk in the same path. John is fully aware that we cannot do this on our own strength except through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. He knows that with our human love we cannot love one another. In this Easter Season we celebrate and give thanks for the presence of the Holy Spirit who fills us with love and helps us to love one another. May we truly seek God's love so that we may be able to love one another.

Shalom

Paul Swarup