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Perfecting Love

1 John 4.9-12

Series: Blessed Assurance (Communion Series)

The Village Church

May 2, 2026

I. Introduction

- A. The Legacy Foundation sponsors a very popular series here at Shell Point
 - 1. It's called Medical Breakthroughs
 - 2. And it often addresses issues that many in our community have as concerns, especially as we age
 - a. Issues like Alzheimers and other cognitive deficits
 - b. And conditions like Parkinsons, cancer, and other medical issues facing older adults
- B. Arguably, the greatest medical breakthroughs in the past 125 years or so have come about due to the capacity to make visible that which was formally invisible
 - 1. The innovations in imaging have revolutionized nearly every dimension of medical care
 - 2. And all imaging is designed, in one way or another, to reveal in our human bodies, that which is hidden
 - a. And in that revelation, to identify conditions which are amenable to treatments or interventions
- C. It all began with Wilhelm Röntgen, the German physicist who discovered X-rays in 1895
 - 1. He was able to use his first guinea pig – his wife – and reveal that her hand had indeed been comprised of bones which could now be visualized
 - 2. It wasn't long before doctors were using x-rays to diagnose fractures, and guide dental procedures
 - 3. In the mid-20th Century Ultrasound revolutionized obstetrics and gynecology, and enabled visualization of fetal development
 - 4. CT scans utilized the development of computer technology in the 1980's along with x-rays to create 3 dimensional views of the body, enabling diagnosis of soft tissue conditions, tumors, and vascular diseases
- D. Medical science was just getting started
 - 1. I remember when Magnetic Resonance Imaging, or MRI, burst on the scene
 - a. In which powerful magnets and radio waves were used instead of radiation
 - b. And the soft tissue images of muscles, joints and even the brain were astonishing
 - c. Almost like you were looking at pictures in an anatomy textbook

2. And then there was positron emission tomography, or PET scans, where metabolic activity can be detected, aiding in the diagnosis of cancers and neurological disorders
- E. It really is quite remarkable to consider the progress made in just our lifetimes of the capacity to reveal that which is ordinarily invisible to human observation
- F. Now, all of these techniques are normally used to discover some adverse physical condition or disease
 1. But long before the use of these extraordinary scientific techniques, God was interested in revealing other dimensions of life which are also normally invisible to the human eye
 2. In particular, God wants to reveal to us perhaps the greatest of all invisible characteristics of life
 - a. He wants to reveal what real love is
- G. Love, you see, is an affection
 1. A condition of the heart
 - a. Not the heart in the sense of the blood pump that our cardiologists are concerned with
 - b. That kind of heart is now amenable to all kinds of imaging techniques
 2. No, this heart is the core of the human person
 - a. And it is not reducible to a physical organ
 - b. It is the center of one's desires, aspirations, and inclinations
 - c. One's personality and values
 3. And these things are invisible
 - a. Unless they are revealed
 - b. And God has His own imaging techniques that reveal to us what our love condition looks like
- H. The key word in the New Testament is the word **phaneroō (Gk) = to reveal**
 1. We find it in verse 9 of 1 John 4: "In this the love of God **was made manifest** among us..."
 2. He has revealed to us what love looks like
 - a. True love
 - b. The love of God
 3. Which without some means of revelation would remain hidden

II. Text

- A. **1 John 4:9–12** (ESV) —
 1. 9 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.
 2. 10 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.
 3. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
 4. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

III. Blessed Assurance

- A. In our communion series we return today to our study of 1 John which we entitled Blessed Assurance
 - 1. That title was chosen because it reflects the purpose of 1 John
 - 2. **1 John 5:13** (ESV) —
 - a. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.
- B. So, 1 John is about knowing, being certain, of having eternal life in Christ
 - 1. Not just eternal in the sense of a really, really long life
 - 2. But eternal in a qualitative sense
 - a. An eternal kind of life
 - b. An abundant life, spiritually united to our Savior Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit
 - c. Living a life of meaning and purpose
 - d. A life which reflects the love of God
- C. And as you recall, our study of this epistle shows John's use of four tests
 - 1. Four assessments of our spiritual condition
 - a. Which are able to confirm to us that we truly belong to the family of God
 - 2. There is the test of obedience – that if we obey the commands of Christ, we can be assured of our salvation
 - 3. And then there is the test of truth – that if we truly acknowledge that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, we can be assured of our salvation
 - 4. And there is the test of abiding – that if we continue in our commitment to follow Christ we can be assured
- D. But the overriding test that John gives us is the test of love
 - 1. That if we truly love our brothers and sisters, we can be assured of our salvation
 - 2. And much of this epistle majors in this test of love
 - a. And we explored this issue in our last message

IV. God is Love

- A. **1 John 4:7–8** (ESV) —
 - 1. 7 Beloved, let us love one another,
 - 2. for love is from God,
 - 3. and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.
 - 4. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God,
 - 5. because God is love.
- B. In that last message we are reminded of our obligation to love one another
 - 1. But that admonition is followed by a series of reasons, or exhortations, of why and how we are to love
 - 2. God is the source of our love – “for love is from God”
 - 3. We can love because we have been born of God by His Spirit – “whoever loves has been born of God and knows God”
 - 4. And the nature of God is love – “because God is love”

- C. But to say God is love is to make a statement about the heart of God
 - 1. The invisible nature of His character and person
- D. So, we need an imaging technique to truly see and understand the nature of this love
 - 1. Not an imaging technique designed to reveal some physical malady or illness
 - 2. But an imaging technique designed to reveal the redemptive work of God in our loves, creating in us the love that images the love of God

V. **The Manifestation of Love**

- A. Our text begins with the manifestation of the love of God
 - 1. **1 John 4:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 In this **the love of God was made manifest among us,**
 - b. that God sent his only Son into the world,
 - c. so that we might live through him.
 - 2. Note that the way God manifests His love for us is by sending His Son
 - a. His Son – the most precise image of the Father
 - 3. **Colossians 1:15** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
 - 4. **Hebrews 1:3** (ESV) —
 - a. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...
 - 5. **2 Corinthians 4:4** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers,
 - b. to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ,
 - c. who is the image of God.
 - 6. God is invisible
 - a. And the only way He is made visible is through Jesus Christ
 - b. Jesus Christ – the image of God and the glory of God
 - 7. And the only way we know the love of God is through the love of Jesus Christ
 - 8. **John 3:16** (ESV) —
 - a. 16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”
 - 9. **Romans 8:32** (ESV) —
 - a. 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
 - 10. We know the invisible God only through Jesus Christ
- B. **Its Purpose**
 - 1. Note also the purpose of this revelation
 - 2. **1 John 4:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 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.**

3. Life in Christ; life through Christ
 - a. Life in union with Christ
 - b. That is, in fact, the purpose of God's revelation of Himself in His Son
 4. The theme of 1 John is that we might "know that you have eternal life"
 - a. But the theme of John's gospel is similar
 5. **John 20:31** (ESV) —
 - a. 31 but these [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and **that by believing you may have life in his name.**
 6. In fact, life is the essence of the nature of Christ
 7. **John 1:4** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 8. **John 10:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 ... I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.
 9. The love of God was made manifest among us – revealed among us – is so that we might have genuine, real, spiritual life in union with His Son
- C. **Its Direction**
1. But then, look also at the direction in which this love is manifest
 2. **1 John 4:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 In this is love,
 - b. **not that we have loved God**
 - c. **but that he loved us...**
 3. God didn't wait around for us to love Him
 - a. In fact, we were running away from Him!
 - b. Just like Adam and Eve – we were hiding from God
 - c. And when we found ourselves coming to Him, longing for Him, even loving Him – we discovered that He'd been drawing us with the cords of love all along
 - d. That He was the initiator of any affection that we had for Him
 4. **Romans 5:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 5. **Romans 5:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
 6. We were sinners, enemies of God
 - a. But God sent His Son to die in our place
 - b. And His plan of redemption was engaged and enacted long before anyone trusted Him for salvation
 - c. Even as far back as Adam and Eve and the garden
 - d. Where God determined to crush the head of the serpent by the seed of the woman
 7. **Ephesians 2:1–5** (ESV) —

- a. 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins
 - b. 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
 - c. 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
 - d. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,
 - e. 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—
8. We were spiritually dead
- a. Yet God loved us!
 - b. Loved us enough to send His Son to die for us
 - c. Why? Because of the great love with which he loved us!
- D. **Its Strategy**
- 1. And then, of course, we must not miss God’s strategy for revealing His love
 - 2. **1 John 4:10** (ESV) —
 - a. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God
 - b. but that he loved us and sent his Son
 - c. **to be the propitiation for our sins.**
 - 3. Oh my, there it is again!
 - a. Our favorite word: propitiation!
 - 4. Now, what does that word mean?
 - a. It means a wrath removing sacrifice
 - 5. You see, apart from the grace of God, we deserve the wrath of God
 - a. God, who is altogether holy and righteous, requires righteousness of His morally responsible creatures
 - b. And by nature, we are anything but righteous
 - c. Our lives are marked by self-seeking and self-interest
 - d. Submission to the kingship of God Almighty is the last thing our corrupt nature desires
 - 6. **Romans 1:18** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,
 - b. who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
 - 7. Jesus took upon Himself the just punishment for our sins
 - a. He took upon Himself the wrath we deserve so we would never have to!
 - b. His sacrifice is our propitiation – the sacrifice that removes His righteous wrath from us
 - 8. **Romans 5:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood,
 - b. much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

9. Recall that the word for propitiation in our text is **hilasmos (Gk)**
 - a. It is the root for the word **hilasterion (Gk)** which the Greek translation of the OT uses for the mercy seat
 - b. The gold covering of the ark of the covenant
 - c. On which the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled to atone for the sins of the people of God under the Old Covenant
10. That's why propitiation is such a precious word for us – and why we should all understand it
 - a. It is the sacrifice of Christ which removes the penalty of our sin – the just wrath of God – from us
 - b. And reflects the love and mercy of God in a way that nothing else could!
11. And that's God's strategy for revealing His love for us
12. **1 John 4:9–10** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 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.
 - b. 10 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.

VI. **The Obligation of Love**

- A. And then our text takes us back to where we've been before
 1. To our obligation of love
 2. To love our brothers and sisters in ways that reflect God's love for us
- B. **1 John 4:11** (ESV) —
 1. 11 **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**
- C. This is not the first time we've heard this, is it?
- D. **1 John 3:11** (ESV) —
 1. 11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
- E. **1 John 3:23** (ESV) —
 1. 23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.
- F. And even in the last message we heard it:
- G. **1 John 4:7** (ESV) —
 1. 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.
- H. So, have you gotten the message yet?
- I. It is our obligation to love our brothers and sisters
- J. Well, what does that mean? What does that look like?
 1. Stay tuned – we return to our study of Romans next week with Chapter 12
 2. And Chapter 12 really details what genuine love for our brothers and sisters looks like!
- K. But in this text, we are reminded, once again, of our obligation to love one another
 1. Remember, this was the prime concern of Jesus
 - a. And He provides a qualitative measure of this kind of love

2. **John 13:34** (ESV) —
 - a. 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another:
 - b. just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
3. **John 15:12** (ESV) —
 - a. 12 “This is my commandment,
 - b. that you love one another as I have loved you.
- L. Wow! As Jesus loved us, we are to love one another!
 1. With the same kind of sacrificial love, we are to love one another
- M. This is the mark of the Christian
 1. **John 13:35** (ESV) —
 - a. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 2. Do you want the world to know the love of God through Christ?
 - a. Then love one another as Christ loved you!
 - b. Then the world, then your neighbors, will take note
 3. Because that’s not the way of the world
 - a. But it is the way of Christ

VII. **The Perfection of Love**

- A. Finally, let’s see how this love is perfected
- B. **1 John 4:12** (ESV) —
 1. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another,
 2. God abides in us
 3. **and his love is perfected in us.**
- C. Again – God is invisible
 1. And His love is invisible
 - a. Until He made it visible in Jesus Christ
- D. How does He make it visible today?
 1. He makes it visible today through us!
 2. Through us as we love one another
- E. When we love one another, the Spirit of God indwells us, abides in us
 1. And the text says “his love is perfected in us”
- F. This doesn’t mean that our love is perfect, in the sense of it being without flaw
 1. It means that it comes to completion, fulfills its purpose
 2. The love of God is just a concept to the world until the people of God, through Christ dwelling in us, living His life through us
 - a. Loving one another
 - b. Make the love of God visible to a desperate humanity
 - c. A humanity without any kind of image of what true love looks like
- G. Oh, the world thinks it knows about love
 1. But the world’s notion of love is corrupted and counterfeited
 - a. It bears no relation to the true love of God in Jesus
 - b. And no relations to the genuine sacrificial love of the brothers and sisters for one another
- H. You may be the only image of true, godly love your neighbor will ever see

1. But when they see it – the love of God abides in us and is perfected in us
- I. Pastor Don did a wonderful job of communicating the various ways in which we care for one another in our community
 1. And that’s simply a reflection of this grand obligation to love one another
 2. It doesn’t need a program or a formal ministry to do it, as important as those programs may be
 - a. It simply needs believers, filled with the Spirit of God, responding to the needs of our brothers and sisters
 - b. And to the needs of our neighbors
- J. That’s the way the love of God is perfected in us

VIII. Trinitarian Fingerprints

- A. Now, one more “Finally”
- B. We can’t help but observe how the love of the Trinity drives this enterprise of love
- C. The love of God is evident in this passage
 1. “Love is from God”
 2. “God is love”
 3. “The love of God was made manifest among us”
 4. “God sent his only Son”
- D. And of course, there is the love of the Son
 1. “God sent his only son into the world... to be the propitiation for our sins”
 2. The love of Jesus is nowhere more evident than His sacrifice on the cross
- E. And then there is the love of the Holy Spirit
 1. “Whoever loves has been born of God” – which refers to the new birth, being born again, regenerated, by the Spirit of God
 2. “If we love one another, God abides in us” – the Spirit of God indwells us
- F. Why is this important?
 1. Dear friends, the Trinity is not just a theological construct
 - a. Evident in the scriptures through the unit of the Godhead, and the distinct personhood of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 2. The Trinity is a society of love through which all genuine love flows
 - a. We love because there is mutual and perfect love within the persons of the One true God
- G. The Trinity is no mere doctrine; no theological proposition to be debated
 1. The Trinity is our lifeblood of love
 - a. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit – with mutual, perfect, and wholly satisfying love for one another
 - b. Have poured out their love into our hearts by His Spirit
 2. So that we might reflect the image of God
 - a. And so reveal the invisible God to a world blinded by sin and self
- H. **2 Corinthians 13:14** (ESV) —
 1. 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
 2. and the love of God
 3. and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
 4. be with you all.