

Love ...is supposed to be powerful.

It is supposed to create things inside of us and deliver us from things that hold us down....

Love is supposed to **unite us** with someone better than ourselves.....

- Have **you** known **that kind** of love?

Most people in the world have **not**. They have sought after it.....longed for it.....

Been depressed after they were disappointed for the 20th time.....that someone they **thought** could deliver it.....didn't.....

The reason that most people have never known that kind of love..... is they have looked to PEOPLE....and THINGS in this worldnot realizing.....

that God is the **only ONE** capable of giving it....

God **IS** love.

When He loves He does so out of His very **nature**.... He doesn't have to **FALL** in love..... or find just the right person to love.....

His love for you is not a response to anything you **have**..... or could do for Him....

Best of all.....He has chosen to love you in a way that is exceedingly **BETTER** than what you could think or imagine...

We are going to talk this morning about the Power of God's **Saving Love**.....

It is love in Action..... and God has put it on display through the mission of Jesus Christ....

John 3:16-21

" "For God **so** loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish but **have** eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Marketing professionals tell us that Diamonds say “I love you” better than anything else....

The **size** of the diamond (they say) is a visible demonstration of how much you love the lady you give it to.....

Everytime the bride to be... (and later the bride) looks at the ring.... they see the **value** of their husband’s love...depicted in the jewell...

God says I love you to His Bride.... by giving ... the **Pearl** of Greatest Price.... His Only Son

Every time we look at the perfection of Christ....His life.....(especially) when we see Him hanging on the cross.... suffering in our place...in death...

We see a visible, **tangible** reminder of the INTENSITY of God’s love for us...

Its glory **sparkles** more brilliantly than any diamond ever could.....

- Remember when God tested Abraham?

God had kept His promise in giving he and Sarah a son in their old age..... (**Isaac**- the child of promise).... through Isaac, God had also promised to make Abraham into the father of many nations....

Yet, as Isaac grew up.....and Abraham loved him heart and soul..... God surprisingly said...

Genesis 22:2

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.””

What? Most of us would have run the other way....

But...by faith....Abraham awoke the next morning and proceeded to obey God’s command. He built an altar, laid Isaac on the altar....and raised the knife to **slaughter** him.....

But just as he did so....

Genesis 22:11-12

"...the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your

only son, from me.’”

God **SPARED** Isaac..... After that.... God promised (there in that place) He would provide....a **lamb**.....

In the fullness of time.... again, God kept His promise...

He sent Jesus...(His only Son)as the lamb of God to take away the sin of the world....

God did **not** SPARE **His** own Son... but offered Him up in our place....

So that through Him.... we might LIVE.

THAT is the measuring stick by which anything called LOVE must be measured....

God could have given out of the overflow of His abundance.... (as most of us will do this Christmas).....

But God gave us the CORE of Who He is..... He gave us His **BEST**....

Therefore....

God's Saving Love is as **POWERFUL** as the reality of Christ Jesus Himself....

Better than any other paragraph in the Bible.... this one (in John 3) describes the **Mission** of Jesus in the world.....

It is a mission to DEMONSTRATE the beauty and the power of **God's love** for a sinful humanity.... in an effort (through that love) to **save** us from what we deserve.

Let's look at how God accomplishes this:

Saving Love

1. Is Received by Faith

As Corey taught us well last week..... Jn. **3:16** tells us that God sent His Son (on mission) into the whole WORLD....

He came to the Jews first.... but His message and His saving actions have been and are still designed to be taken to every person on the planet.....

The Light of Christ is (right now) shining upon the entire lump of sinful humanity in rebellion against God.....as the gospel is proclaimed...

The **line in the sand**.....between those who benefit from this powerful **love** displayed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.....

is whether or not you **BELIEVE**.....it is **true**.

1 John 4:9-10

"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."

Left alone..... you will try to **evade** the reality that you are a sinner.... guilty of rebelling against and breaking God's holy law....

You will compare yourself with others....in an effort to appease your guilty conscience.... you will try and dismiss the reality of a coming judgment as **myth**....

But **if**... by faith.... you acknowledge the Word of God to be true..... that not only are you a sinner.... but that the wages of your sin.... **MUST** be satisfied by **death**.....

That the anger and wrath of God (for your specific sins) must be **APPEASED**.....

That God is not able to just sweep all your transgressions under some heavenly rug.....

Because they are a stench..... they are rotten..... and God is pure and holy...

So your **sin DEBT** can not be written off..... (no bankruptcy court in heaven)

Your sin must be **PAID** for.....

That is what PROPITIATION means..... Jesus' death **appeased** the anger of God which you and I have stored up by our sins....He absorbed your punishment... the wrath.... the death your sin deserves.... paid in full on the cross.

1 John 4:10

"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."

- Do you BELIEVE that? Do you **RECEIVE** that by faith?

THAT is saving faith..... a BELIEF that results in you offering up..... surrendering your life to God....

Where you are no longer under your own rule..... you BELIEVE that your soul has been purchased.... redeemed by God through Christ.

So....Jesus becomes your Master.... your King.....your Lord.

So we have God sending His Son into the **whole world**... as its Savior.... (His death is SUFFICIENT to pay for everyone's sin).....but that atonement is only **EFFECTIVE** for those who confess Jesus as their Lord....it is they who alone HAVE the gift of eternal life....

1 John 4:14-15

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the **world**. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God **abides** in him, and he in God."

Eternal life is knowing God.... **living** in union with God...through faith in Jesus Christ.

If you ARE trusting in this God who sent Jesus to save you..... it is BECAUSE you have apprehended that He did so out of His infinite **LOVE** for you.....

You should **THANK HIM**..... **ADORE** Him..... for His love.... offer yourself up to Him.....

Present your body as a living sacrifice.....just as He **offered up** His own Son for you....

In fact..... that activity should characterize the daily life of everyone who calls themselves a Christian.

Here's why:

Saving Love

2. Delivers you from God's Verdict

A **courtroom** is a scary place if you have been indicted for a serious crime. I am sure you have seen enough of it on TV..... where the prosecuting attorney eagerly exposes the GUILT of the accused..... by bringing bit after bit of evidence.....

Condemning them..... casting **blame**..... proving beyond doubt that they are in fact GUILTY of breaking the law....

- That is Satan's role.....in your life.

He has gladly volunteered to **Prosecute** your case..... Not because he loves the Holy Standard of the Law.....or wants to see justice preserved....

But because he **hates** God and he hates you....and wants to see you destroyed in hell.....like he is going to be....

Even **now**..... (for some of you) the Accuser of the Brethren is bringing the thoughts of your mind to the witness stand to **CONDEMN** you..... He is dragging out old skeletons from the closet.....

Failures you have had this past week..... all in the Presence of God...your judge.

Scary place to be..... (is it not?)...

Especially when you realize that the **JUDGE** before whom he is presenting these things.....already knows the whole truth about you...

And that the JUDGE has already pronounced a **VERDICT** of guilty as charged upon your case....

Apart from Christ - every man, woman and child stands condemned before God....

Because... we are all descendents of Adam..... (Rom. 5 tells us)

Adam's one act of treason against God..... led to **condemnation** and death for all men

That is why all men need a Savior..... and that is why John says:

John 3:17-18

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,

No need for eternal Word of God to become flesh..... in order to **condemn** us.... (that judgment has already been pronounced because of Adam's sin) we are all **already** under God's wrath....- we all have already been rightfully sentenced to death)...

Here is the purpose of Christ's mission:

but in order that the world might be **saved** through him. Whoever **believes** in him is not condemned, (see the line in the sand?)

but whoever does **not** believe is **condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

Romans 1 tells us that God has revealed enough about Himself just in **nature**.... so that men are **without excuse** for not worshipping Him.....

As a human race... we stand condemned already.....

But if you have heard the good news of God loving so much that He sent a Savior....

And you continue to **reject** Him.....

There is **NO HOPE** for you.... NONE.... no alternatives..... No rehab can help you.....you are doubly dead.... (even while you live)...

you have rejected the kindness of God's saving love...

Romans 2:4-5

"Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that **God's kindness** is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are **storing up wrath** for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."

God does not have pleasure in the death of anyone.... so **TURN** now and live.... believe in the Savior...

I say.... there is grace right now for you to repent!

Be reconciled to the Judge.... who has sent His Son to save you...

If you still refuse..... at least be honest with yourself as to why..... you **LOVE your sin** too much to leave it....

John 3:19

"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people **loved the darkness** rather than the light because **their works were evil.**"

Isn't it amazing.... that the **one constant** throughout the history of mankind....

Is that regardless of race.... or culture.... environment or technological progress.....
..... people **LOVE** sin.

They crave increasing amounts of WRONG things..... they love running amuck....and they prefer hanging with those who likewise love the **dark side**....

You can study anthropology and see it or you can just survey your Bible....

Gen. 1 & 2 God creates man in a **pristine** environment... living in communion with God.. Gen. 3 man falls into sin....results in the death penalty... and the whole creation being placed under the **curse**...

Gen. 4 opens with a murder at church....and by Ch. 6 we have this:

Genesis 6:5-6

"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it **grieved him** to his **heart.**"

That is the **VERDICT**.... same is true today.....

Men love darkness... they love their sin.....and prefer to stay there... so they stand CONDEMNED.

Please believe that your **affects God** at the heart level.... (it grieves him to his heart).

- Ever been **hurt** by someone you had loved with all your soul? (lover, friend, your own child)

Hard to be indifferent towards someone you truly love.....

God has never for one moment been **INDIFFERENT** towards mankind. His LOVE for us..... turns to hatred for the evil we choose to cling to....

We become His enemies.

So the judgment.... the WRATH of God.... His violent response to.... our sin.

You recall what God's response to mankind's love affair with evil was in Genesis don't you?

Gen. 6Because men loved evil INSTEAD of God..... God blotted out every human being on the face of the planet.... (save Noah and his family)... in the **flood**.

How much **MORE** do we stand condemned today.... having spurned the Light of Christ.... sent into our darkness.... to SAVE us from the carrying out of the judgment....

Larry King...said the other day that he doesn't believe he is going anywhere when he dies.... and so he wants to be frozen in case they develop a cure for whatever killed him... they can bring him back to life....

That's some hope, huh? Larry has heard the gospel..... (clearly articulated – many times...)... but because his deeds are evil... he prefers to stay in the darkness... where he is comfortable..... where he is in control.

Perhaps like some of you....

You may have heard it said before..... as a human race.... we are on death row....

The **VERDICT** (which each of us SHOULD plead guilty to) has already been pronounced.....

All that remains is the **carrying out**the execution of the **SENTENCE**.....

Here is prophetic report of that Day:

Revelation 21:7-8

"The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the **faithless**, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

If this sounds awful to you... it should.... but I want you to see it as an evidence of God's love... and mercy that He is giving you this **warning**....

Because the grip of your love for sin is so strong... only the grace of God can bring you out of darkness and into the light....

John 3:20

"For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed."

The light in Scripture.... is used consistently to represent the contrast between righteousness and wickedness... between truth and error....

John has already told us that Jesus is the TRUE light that has come into the world...

Everywhere He went... people saw the glory of God on full display....

and their deeds were EXPOSED.....

Peter... realizing He was in the presence of this Light said to Jesus.... Depart from me for I am a sinful man.....

Now that Jesus has been raised from the dead.... and sent His Spirit upon the church.... the reality is that YOU are the light of the world....

The truth of the gospel.... lived out through your life..... is designed to make people who love their sin uncomfortable....

You NOT being conformed to the darkness of this age..... is designed to illuminate people's need for a Savior....

Walk in love.... and pray for any who persecute you..... but..don't be surprised if those in darkness hate you.... because your deeds are righteous.... Jesus says:

John 15:18

" "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."

Like Jesus ... keep on speaking the truth in love.... to all who will listen... and love your enemies... even in their sin...

Know that the mission of redemption is being accomplished through you....

Saving Love

3. Produces **Evidence** of God's Work

In Sept, 2010, our President authorized NASA to chart a new direction in an effort to send human explorers to Mars in the next 25 years....

This MISSION is geared towards looking for **evidence** of habitation..... in other words they want to know if ANY form of life ever existed on Mars....

Who knows... if Jesus tarries... whether that mission will be successful.....

But the Mission we have been talking about today... (although far more costly) is **guaranteed** to succeed!

The Word of God will NOT return void without accomplishing the purpose for which it was sent.....

That purpose of the gospel... is **EVIDENCE** the saving power of God's love!

To make VISIBLE the invisible RESCUE efforts of the gospel....

John 3:21

"But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be **clearly seen** that his works have been carried out in God."

v. 16 taught us that EVERYONE should be offered the good news of the Savior.....

v. 21 tells us that if anyone DOES believe....it is because GOD has worked in their soul....

The invisible work of the Holy Spirit of God..... **convicting** of sin.... opening the eyes of the blind.... granting repentance..... **imparting new life**....

Will become VISIBLE through the **DEEDS** of those who come to the Light.....

That is why Jesus said...."You shall know them by their FRUITS"

The deeds of CONFESSING their need for a Savior.....

The deed of RECEIVING Jesus as their King.....learning to TRUST in Him with all their heart....

Then.... continually coming to the Light of the Word..... and saying ... (in union with the Holy Spirit).... Search me O God... and know my heart.... TRY me....

Shine your LIGHT into every corner of my life.... EXPOSE any darkness in me...and give me grace to CHANGE....

HELP me to apply the realities of the gospel..... and the power of a risen Savior.....

.... that I might bring you **GLORY**... as I walk in the Light.....

That... is the result of **Saving Love**. I pray you will experience it in full measure today.