

Begin Service with:

Psalm 63:1-8

A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

- ¹ You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.
- ² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
- ³ ***Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.***
- ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
- ⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.
- ⁶ On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.
- ⁷ Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
- ⁸ I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.

Intro

There are Bibles in front of you

If you could turn to 1 Samuel 20

There's an outline for you to take notes - if you wish

Let me ask God for His help and understanding

Let's pray...

A group of professionals asked some children age 4 to 8, "What does love mean?" Here are some of the answers the children gave.

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other." -Kari, age 5

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs." -Chrissy, age 6

"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day." -Noelle, age 7

"Love is when mummy gives daddy the best piece of chicken." -Elaine, age 5

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even though you left him alone all day." -Mary Ann, age 4

"Love is when my mummy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK." Danny - age 7

The topic today is love - so what is love?

Dictionary definition

[PowerPoint 1-Love]

An intense feeling of deep affection.

That doesn't seem to cut it though - really - does it?

And what about **true love**?

In our OT Bible reading from 1 Samuel 20 - we see true love in action

Between David - the future king - AND - Jonathan - the son of the current King, King Saul.

[PowerPoint 2-True love heading]

David and Jonathan's true love (1 Samuel 20:1-42)

So, what does *true love* look like

3 things

[PowerPoint 2a-committed]

First, true love, is being ***totally committed to the other person*** - that's in verses 1 to 4

David has had to flee from King Saul - who has been trying to kill him.

But here we see Jonathan, Saul's son, **totally committed** to keeping David alive.

Jonathan is shocked to find out his father is trying to kill David, at first.

But David convinces Saul it is true.

And so, Jonathan - in v4 - promises "*whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you*"

By this Jonathan means - he loves David - so much - he is committed to help him in whatever way he can

Applying this to us:

- Are we totally committed in our relationship to God and His Son Jesus - or is it half-hearted?
- Are we totally committed to our husband or wife?
- Are we totally committed to our family?
- Are we totally committed to our friends?
- Are we totally committed to our church family?

(pause)

Are we totally committed to do whatever our family and friends want - in the context of helping them (not illegal stuff)? Or do we make excuses?

(pause)

When God the Father's Son, Jesus, came to this Earth - He was committed to do the Father's will -

In John 4:34 - Jesus said

"My food, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

True love - is committed

Are we committed to do the will of the Father - and to do the work He wants us to do which is to share the Good News of His Son, Jesus?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 2b-love as oneself]

Second, true love *is loving the other person as oneself* - that's in verses 5-40.

The bottom line for Jonathan is - he loves David so much - he is prepared to stand up to his father, King Saul - as though he was standing up to his father for himself

Jonathan and David come up with a plan

- There is going to be a New moon feast at Saul's Palace
- And David will be expected to attend the feast
- But David will hide in the field and not attend the feast
- Jonathan will assess King Saul's reaction when David doesn't show up for the feast
- So, Jonathan promises David - he will sound out his father (v12) - and promises he will send word to David and let him know Saul's reaction
- Sure, enough when Jonathan attends the feast at Saul's palace

- King Saul notices David is missing - on the first day - he assumes David is unclean and unable to attend
- But on the second day - Saul again notices David is missing and asks Jonathan where David is
- Jonathan - makes an excuse for David - that David's family were observing a sacrifice at Bethlehem (v28)
- Saul gets very angry - and accuses Jonathan of betraying him - in favour of David
- Jonathan stands up to his father and defends David's honour
- But that just makes Saul even more angry - and he hurls his spear at Jonathan (v32)
- Now Jonathan is fully convinced that Saul intends to kill David
- Jonathan had thought the best of his father - but had been disappointed

Jonathan is prepared to stand up to his father on behalf of David - because as v17 says - Jonathan loved David as he loved himself

And illustration from my own life

When I moved to Manchester at age 7 -

My cousin Frank and I were inseparable

I was an only child - Frank had an older brother and 2 younger sisters

But it was as a though Frank and I - were the brothers

Each week-end - we would take it turns to stay at each other's house

In our teens - our mum's (who were sisters) had a falling out - and they didn't talk to each other for nearly two years

But Frank and I loved each other so much - we're weren't going to stop seeing each other just because our Mum's weren't talking

So, we kept our weekend contact up - even though it was 2 buses to get to each other's place

We did everything together - playing golf, learning to drive together, tinkering with our cars, going out on foursome dates and so on.

We'd even think of ways to get our Mum's to talk again - which eventually paid off

You see our love for each other - like David and Jonathan - it was bigger than family fights

David and Jonathan's bond - came from the fact that they were both Godly men - and so their love for God and their love for each other - was way bigger than who would be the next King. David was anointed to be the next king - and Jonathan should have been the next King - if Saul hadn't been so disobedient to God. But none of that mattered to David and Jonathan - they were committed friends and their concern for each other was as though they were concerned for themselves.

We should point out that the Hebrew word used in this OT Bible passage is *ahav* - *it's an appetite or longing for someone, a love of a friend, a love towards another human and a love towards God*

Applying this to our lives today

- In our love and concern for others - is it the same as our love and concern for ourselves?
- Do we care for others - as if we were caring for ourselves?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 2c-Forever]

Third, true love *is forever* - that's in verses 41-42.

Now that David's fears - that Saul wants him dead - have been confirmed by Jonathan

There's a major problem.

David can no longer stay and serve in the palace - otherwise he will certainly be killed

David must be a man on the run from now on - a fugitive.

But Jonathan must stay.

Notice the respect David has for Jonathan

See v41 - David is the future king - but he bows down before Jonathan 3 times with his face to the ground - in the Bible this bowing 3 times is a mark of respect to authority.

It's as though David is saying - *Jonathan - to me you are just like a king - and you act like a king - far more than your father, the king*

And then look at verse 42 - Jonathan swears an oath of a ***forever friendship*** - *"The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever"*

In today's terms - we'd say - they were ***BFF's - Best Friends Forever!***

Then they had to part ways due to circumstances - and in fact they only see each other one more time.

Yet their friendship is a ***forever friendship*** - and stands as an example to us today of what true love is - a forever friendship - loyal and committed

Applying this to us today.

What are our relationships like?

Are they forever - or just until someone better comes along or just whilst things are running smoothly?

In 1976, there were 63,230 recorded divorces in Australia out of a population of 14 million people.

In 2017, the population increased to 24.6 million people, but the number of divorces dropped to 49,032.

There are several contributing factors to the decreasing divorce rate in Australia:

- Less people are getting married to start with [not wanting to commit]
- More couples are cohabiting before marriage [in case someone better comes along – or honeymoon period wears off]
- The average marriage age has increased

True Love of Jesus (1 John 4-7-10)

As always, our OT Bible passage must somehow connect to Jesus in the NT

And it's not hard to make the connection - especially when we're talking about love...

In our NT reading from 1 John 4:7-12 [turn there now]

V7 says - love actually comes from God

[PowerPoint 3-Love of God]

The word used for love here is agape

It is unconditional love - love that is chosen and acted out by the will. It is not love based on the goodness of the person being loved. Rather this is benevolent love that always seeks the good of the person being loved. This type of love is exclusive to the Christian community because it flows directly from God's love.

As verse 7 says "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God"

The Apostle John's argument in verse 7 and 8 - is that because love comes from God -

If we're loving one another - we know God

If we're not loving one another - we can't possibly know God

It begs the question then - if we hate someone right now - or we're being unforgiving - then those emotions and feelings - aren't coming from God - because God is loving and forgiving

(pause)

We've tried to give a definition of love

But John gives us the perfect definition of love in verse 9

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

God's love is the Cross of Jesus - and the fact that God the Father allowed His Son to die - so we could have forgiveness of our sins - and continue to live - free from the punishment of sin.

V10 - goes on to say - God took the initiative in this love - He loved us first and sent Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins

Jesus Himself says there is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends (John 15:13) and that's what He did.

Jesus on the cross - *is a picture of true love*

(pause)

Our Response to Jesus' true love (1 John 4:11-12)

As we said - the Greek word used here in - 1 John 4 - for love is **agape**

[PowerPoint 4-Heading]

And **agape** is an unconditional love - which isn't necessarily deserved - and doesn't necessarily always get a response

You see - God loves the whole world that's why He sent His son, Jesus.
But the whole world doesn't believe in Jesus and the whole world hasn't responded to Jesus by loving Him back

Yet the Apostle John does give us our response - in verses 11 and 12

[PowerPoint 4b-v11/12]

V11 - says because God loves us - we need to love one another

And the word for love here is **agape** - not **phileo** - a friendship love - not **philadelphia** - a brotherly & sisterly love - but **agape** love

Agape love is an unconditional and sacrificial love - a love that doesn't expect anything in return

This is very important

Because - I wonder - if we're honest - whether our love for one another is really unconditional?

Is our love only to those who seem deserving and loveable?

Is our love always seeking the best for the one being loved?

Are we expecting anything in return?

The context of John's letter is that he is writing to fellow Christians - so when he says love one another - he's talking about fellow Christians

But I'd like to suggest - that loving one another - has to go beyond these doors and we need to be loving more than just fellow Christians

I say this because elsewhere in the Bible we have - a) the Great Commission and b) because God does not want people to perish but to repent and c) Romans 12 tells us to put our love into action and d) Matthew 25 tells us when we love and help the hungry, the poor, the stranger - we're loving Jesus

So, as the end of v12 says - God lives in us - and His love is made complete in us

Why can John say this?

Because the beginning of v12 - says God is *invisible* - He's never been seen

So how are people going to see what God is like?

By seeing the love of God in us - as we love others!

People will go - wow these people really are loving and caring

That's true love!

Conclusion

I'll finish we've Jesus' words

[PowerPoint 5a-John 14:15]

John 14:15

If you love me, keep my commands.

What did Jesus command?

[PowerPoint 5b-John 13:34-35]

John 13:34-35:

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."