

1 John 4:7-21

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

The other day I was teaching English 11. For some reason, the word "love" was mentioned. And why, I don't know, but Nate King Cole's song "L-O-V-E" popped into my head, and well, being the sub I am, I started to sing "L - is for the way you look at me..." You always know when you have choir students in your class, because they will join you in singing as they did with this oldie but goodie. I was pleasantly surprised they knew the song.

And no, we did not sing it all the way through, but if we did we would have come to this line in the lyrics: **"Love is all that I can give to you..."**

While these lyrics in that line of the song are speaking of a love between two people, it could easily be a line the writer of 1 John might have used in his letter to the early church in Ephesus (or Parthians).

The main themes of his letter are Agape (Love) in the lived out in the communal love of one another as experienced through the incarnation of God's Love for all humans in the person of Jesus Christ.

In our reading, the writer of this first letter of John says: **"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."** (vss. 7-8)

We learn to love one another through Jesus' life, his teachings, his relationships, and the way he faced his suffering and death.

Writing in the RevGalBlogPals, Rev. Stephanie says: **"Love is how God has chosen to communicate with us. God did this by sending Jesus into our experience (in this case breaking through the wall and giving us someone to actually see, hear, taste, feel and smell), but God continues to do this by expecting each of us to be a part of loving relationships and communities. We both receive communications of God's love through the love of others and are communicators of God's love when we live in love."**

We live out this love that God in and through Christ has shown us not so we can go to heaven. The love Jesus commanded his followers to live out in all their relationships was heaven, right here and right now on earth.

This love we live out together is showing the world still today - God in human flesh and the kingdom of heaven on earth.

This love ushers in the new creation when all God's creatures will live in peace together.

Writing in his book, *The Magnificent Defeat*, Fredrick Buechner says:
THE LOVE FOR equals is a human thing—of friend for friend, sibling for sibling. It is to love what is loving and lovely. The world smiles.

The love for the less fortunate is a beautiful thing—the love for those who suffer, for those who are poor, the sick, the failures, the unlovely. This is compassion, and it touches the heart of the world.

The love for the more fortunate is a rare thing—to love those who succeed where we fail, to rejoice without envy with those who rejoice, the love of the poor for the rich, of the black man for the white man. The world is always bewildered by its saints.

And then there is the love for the enemy—love for the one who does not love you but mocks, threatens, and inflicts pain. The tortured's love for the torturer. This is God's love. It conquers the world."

God's love does conquer the world. God's love is perfect and perfected in and through our learning to love others, even our enemies as Christ modeled for us. This is the Love the writer of 1 John reminds his audience and us to live into and out of in all our relationships.

As the late Irish poet, John O'Donohue said: **"Love is absolutely vital for a human life. For love alone can awaken what is divine within you."**

You know Nate King Cole song may have been meant as a love song between two people, but when you think of L-O-V-E as being all God can give to us in the gift of Jesus, we begin to understand that it isn't a game but a way of life, our life as followers of Christ. And only in living out God's love for others can we make it.

Love indeed was made for you and me, and for all the world.

Amen.