

“The dimensions of God’s love”: Ephesians 3:14-15

Second Sunday of Lent – Feb 27, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

What is God’s love for us like?

- Differentiated from cheap imitations
- Today, let’s look at five distinguishing characteristics of God’s love for us.

1. God’s love for us is sourced in God’s own triune nature

1 John 8b,16:b
“God is love.”

John 3:35 (cf. John 5:20)
“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.”

John 14:31
“... so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me.:”

- When God is loving us he is doing what comes most naturally to him as a God who is love.

2. God’s love for us is the expected result of his having created us in his image

- God’s love for us is a logical and unavoidable deduction given the fact that he created us in his image.

Ps 149: 4
“Yahweh takes pleasure (*ratsa*) in his people”

- Eph 4:24: Your truest self is in his image - holy, righteous, “godlike”

- So the fact that God loves you is no fluke. How can it be otherwise?! You are worthy of being loved; you deserve to be loved by God.
- Before you were a sinner, you were loved by God.

Eph 1:4

“... for he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.”

- Our sin is accidental to our nature; but our godlikeness is essential to our nature.

3. God’s love for us fills him with a vast and exuberant delight!

- God’s love is not a detached, emotionally-neutral benevolence. It is joyous and emotion laden!
- God doesn’t just love you; he likes you! He likes us and delights in spending time with us because we bring him joy. Knowing this is necessary if we’re going to grow in sharing his life.
- God’s delight in us is contagious: it is shared by all the *elohim*:

Job 38:4a, 7

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth... when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God (*ben elohim*) shouted for joy?”

Luke 15:7

“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

- The *elohim* were utterly thrilled at your creation and recreation. They share in the exuberant delight of our Father.
- Cf. Eph 1:5, rescued by the Father’s “pleasure”, *eudokia*; Isa 53:10, “Yahweh was pleased to crush” Jesus, *chaphets*; Heb 12:2, “for the joy set before” Jesus, he “endured the cross.”
- God has done to forgive our sins, refashion our natures, draw us into the circle of love and joy and laughter of the life of the holy Trinity.

Zephaniah 3:17

“Yahweh your God is with you! He is the Mighty Warrior who saves. He takes great delight in you. He quiets you with his love, he rejoices over you with singing.”

4. God’s love for us takes full account of our moral failures

- God doesn’t ignore, excuse, overlook, minimize our moral failures. Looks at our sins squarely in the face and deals with them decisively, definitely in Jesus Christ.
- If we don’t grasp that a core of our being, we go through life with a vague yet persistent sense that we don’t measure up and are undeserving of God’s love.

Romans 5:6-8

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

- He loved you when you were lost and stuck in sin and couldn’t care less about Him. He sent his Son to die for you then.
- We sin. Our setbacks don’t define us. What defines us are the facts that we are loved and that the Father delights in us.
- But doesn’t God get irritated and angry with me when I blow it?

5. God’s love for us imparts to us the capacity to love him in return and others the way he has loved us

John 17:26

“[I pray] ... that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

1 John 4:5

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”

- The love that God is has been placed inside of us, because God’s Spirit (presence) is inside of us. So we can love God and others with the same love with which God has loved himself and us (cf. John 13:34).

Take away

- The adventure of knowing ourselves as deeply loved by God is lifelong! But nothing is more thrilling and rewarding than to relate to God as our dearly loved “Abba” (Papa) and Jesus as our beloved older brother. By spending time with God each day—being present to him, reading his Word, praying, meditating—we grow in our ability to “grasp” and “know” the infinite dimensions of his love.

Three Lenten exercises this week

1. Begin a bible study on God’s love for his children. You can start anywhere in the bible that you like (OT, NT, Psalms, Gospels). Take note of every time his love is mentioned. Talk to God about those verses. Personalize them by inserting your name into them. Let yourself “feel” loved by God.
2. Call on the Holy Spirit to pour out the love of God into your heart in a fresh way, so you can “feel” his great love for you personally and more continuously (Rom 5:5).
3. Continue memorizing Eph 3:14-19 from last week. Get it deep into your heart. Call it to mind throughout the day, during bathroom breaks, and as go to bed. Let your mind marinate in its truths.

Recommended Resources

- Nouwen, Henri. *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Deckle Edge: 1994.
- Schulz, Jurgen. *What Jesus Wished People Knew About God*. Tellwell: 2017.
- Storms, Sam. *The Singing God: Discover the Joy of Being Enjoyed by God*. Creation House: 1988.