

The First letter of John

True knowledge

Session Five – God is love

Love runs all through this letter. The way John addresses his readers as “dear Children” conveys his love for all Christians as members of God’s family, and receivers of God’s love, I John 2:5. On several occasions we are reminded to love each other: 2:10, 3:11, 3:14 and 3:24. In 3:1 we are told how God loves us, “*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God*”. Then in 3:16 John reminds us that Jesus is our example for love and in 3:18 that we should show our love in our actions.

Read 1 John 4:7-5:12

The verses 4:7-21 contain what John is most anxious to say in his letter. He has been leading up to it and what follows rounds this all off.

“*God is love*” is an amazing statement (4:7 and 16), but it explains so much. We are very familiar with the knowledge that, God so loved the world that he gave his only son to suffer death on the cross to save us, but think what else is a clear demonstration of his love and what it explains. Creation itself came from love, for love must have somewhere to bestow that love. God must have anticipated how humans would disappoint, since to create beings in his own image, meant gifting them with freewill, which was always a risk. However, the divine Love never tires of trying to draw people back to himself. Love also explains the eternal life. God wants the fellowship and love of human beings and sent Jesus as the example of how we could share in his company.

The following questions are all answered in 4:7-21. The teaching is so closely interwoven, that it is worth thinking about it as a series of questions to highlight each point.

1. Who has been born of God and knows him?
2. How does God show his love for us?
3. Why is it so important to love one another?
4. How is God’s love made complete in us?
5. How do we know that we live in him?

As we read chapter 5 of the letter, Tom Wright’s comment in his *Early Christian Letters for Everyman*, is, “There are so many points coming and going in this seemingly infinite spiral of John’s letter, that it is by now hard to keep track of where we have got to. The themes are repeating and double repeating. John is producing variations on what he has already said and then variations on the variations.”

However, he produces a new, interesting point for us to think about.

6. In 5:6 what does he mean by “*water and blood*” and why does he feel it important to say this?

