

This is the LOVE month so we are looking at first of all HOW GOD LOVES US – and then our response to that. (Just a note that EVERY Month is Love Month with God!)

■ 1 John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God; he that loves not, does not know God, for GOD IS LOVE.

There are only two words used for Love in the New Testament –

The word Love has different meanings. The way I LOVE my car – not the same as the way I love my brother – not the same as the way I love my wife.

It is Worth noting that the Greek word for Love that had any sexual connections:

■ (EROS) is NOT in our Bible. Common in Greek but not the kind of love discussed in the New Testament.

The first word commonly used is ■ Phileo – refers to affection towards a friend or family member. Phileo IS USED in a few places to describe God's love for Jesus, God's love for individual believers, and Jesus love for his disciples. That is significant because it carries the context of friendship and the family relationship.

While God is certainly God, He is God our Father (relationship).

And Jesus is LORD, Master, Ruler of Heaven and Earth, but He is our brother.

We need the balance of both of those. We need the strength of Who God Is, Who Jesus Is, AND the Love that ONLY comes IN FAMILY – IN TRUE FRIENDSHIP.

■ But this word is NEVER used as a way for US to express our Love to God.

He CAN'T just be our friend or brother ALONE.

He must FIRST be SOMETHING GREATER than that.

The word most often used for LOVE in the NT is ■ Agape. While EROS and PHILEO were common in Greek writing of the day – Agape is rarely found outside of Biblical context. Because Agape is UNCONDITIONAL LOVE:

■ Love that comes without any conditions or qualifications,

■ Love that gives without expectation of any return.

Both Eros and Phileo come with expectations.

When we give SOMETHING and expect something back – NOT Agape.

Agape Loves just because it does. The NATURE of God.

So when we say 'God is Love' that is what we are talking about.

And that is what God expects of us. He wants us to love Him, Just because He is worthy of being loved. Just because He is lovable. Because He has demonstrated His love

towards us FIRST. If He manipulates us to get love, or we manipulate Him to get something – that is not Love. So God sets the standard.

I want to say one more thing here in the way of context for understanding God Loving us, and us Loving God:

■ Romans 2:4 says it is the GOODNESS, or KINDNESS of God that leads men to repentance.

Repentance is in reference to SIN or SINNERS. And to repent means to turn 180 degrees – to go in the opposite direction. Personally – I failed miserably in my twenties – Involved some ungodly relationships but it was entangled in the JOB I had. Married – two kids – They offered me everything under the sun to stay – but to repent means GET OUT OF THERE! TURN and run the opposite direction! So I QUIT. Left EVERYTHING! First told that story in the Philippines. Ministers don't often share their 'sin'.

I wanted you to have this in mind – ■ because a GOD that LOVES us unconditionally is still a HOLY God. He doesn't stop being ONE to be the OTHER!

GOD IS LOVE – **AND** GOD IS HOLY! BOTH NATURE! Inseparable.

Being Loved by God doesn't let me off the hook for continuing in my STUFF!

God Loves me enough to change me! To require Holiness be developed in me!

Jesus and Peter had a discourse in John 21 with Jesus asking Peter – Do you LOVE me? Agape – unconditionally and without expectation? Peter said Yes, I love you (Phileo) like a brother! Jesus asked again. Same response. So the third time Jesus asked, he used the word Phileo. Peter was not ABLE at this point in their relationship to surrender to Christ without Condition.

So that brings us to How this affects us personally.

What is Our Response to God's UNCONDITIONAL Love?

■ HOW DO WE LOVE HIM BACK?

■ Luke 7:36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

Luke 7:37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume.

Luke 7:38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

■ Luke 7:39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." (God always sees the heart - not the package it comes in)

Luke 7:40 Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said.

Luke 7:41 “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

Luke 7:42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

■ Luke 7:43 Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

Luke 7:44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

Luke 7:45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.

■ Luke 7:46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Luke 7:47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

Luke 7:48 Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

■ Bottom Line – Forgiven a little – Loves a little. Forgiven much – LOVES MUCH.

There is a direct correlation between an UNDERSTANDING OF JUST WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US – AND IN US – OUR DESPERATE NEED FOR A SAVIOR – EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY DAY - and how we LOVE Him Back.

This woman had nothing to LOSE. She was Trash. Broken before she ever met Jesus.

FEET were the Lowest part of the body – and considered mostly unclean in the New Testament. Dusty, filthy, animal waste... FEET ARE ON THE FLOOR. She CHOSE a place at His Feet wiping them with her tears.

How many of us have EVER spent a MOMENT on the floor expressing any gratitude or UNDERSTANDING of just how meaningless we are APART FROM HIM?

Our RELIGIOUS mind sets – just like those in the story – get a little uneasy when someone is too demonstrative. We cringe a little at the ‘misfits’ - the non-conformist to our neat Sunday Services.

Let me tell you – That is who Jesus is looking for. FOR MANY OF US – Our own GOODNESS – ■ Our own PRIDE robs us from RECEIVING the LOVE this woman received. Like Peter – we Phileo ALL DAY LONG – Jesus is my buddy – my Pal – or some distant God we can’t get too close to. Jesus didn’t PHILEO the world!

And He is not asking us to Love Him Like a Brother.

■ He is asking us to Love Him Like there is NO OTHER!

TO BE LOVED BY GOD COST US NOTHING. He LOVES unconditionally.

■ To LOVE HIM BACK Might just cost us everything!! IT should at least cost us our lives!! THE FLOOR IS A GOOD PLACE TO START! The world needs a church that IS NOT SAFE! Apart from the Love of God – He is not safe! He is not a Tame Lion!

I want you to see this story in one other place:

■ Matt. 26:6 While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, Matt. 26:7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

Matt. 26:8 When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked.

Matt. 26:9 “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”

■ Matt. 26:10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me.

Matt. 26:11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.

Matt. 26:12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.

Matt. 26:13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.

This story is in 3 of the 4 gospels. Maybe God wanted us to TAKE NOTICE? He wanted this story told and retold. BECAUSE SHE DEMONSTRATES WHAT TRUE LOVE LOOKS LIKE.

■ True love goes to the lowest places – the darkest places – the humblest places – WITH NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE! Just love for Love's sake. WORLD – WIFE – Co-Workers. (CONTEL)

If you go back to the story in Luke. This woman poured the ointment on Jesus head, then His feet. Then she cried, then she wiped his feet with her tears, and her hair.

When this was all over you want to know what that woman smelled like?

She smelled JUST LIKE JESUS. That is why Jesus wants that story told and retold.

■ Time at his feet is what makes us like him.

■ John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

■ Greek word Proskuneo – prostrate oneself in humility. The challenge of WORSHIP is just that – it's WORSHIP. GET LOW! Spiritually – mentally – physically if need be!

If we as the church – individuals could get THIS ↓ Relationship working like this – then these ↔ relationships would start lining up.

I challenged you early last year to set your Values. As a church – and individuals this would be a good value to set – ■ LEARNING TO BE LOVERS OF GOD! Demonstrate it! Unconditionally! Worship – words – how we handle church – LIVES!