

Week 6: Expectations

Who is God: *The New Testament God of Love*

In churches of old there was a theme of the wrath of God. It's strange but that is how they viewed him. In recent history, the church has swung totally in the reverse and preached the God of love. In many ways, the old church loved the Old Testament. The modern church has embraced the New Testament. The problem is that each clung to one or the other. I have tried to paint you a picture of both halves of the Bible: new and old. They both have the same tune. God is love, creates, and wants a relationship with his creation. Some have reduced God to bad cop and Jesus the good cop.

1. Below tell me the words you would use to describe each of these characters in the Bible: God and Jesus.

If you noticed that Jesus got quite a bit upset at people at various points you would be correct. He bashed people at their parties. He over turned tables in the temple area. Jesus withered a fig tree and told Peter "Get behind me Satan." Is Jesus just a God of love? We will get into Jesus later but for now let's take a look at love in the New testament. This book has rules and commands just like the Old testament. The sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 is harsh. Jesus gives us a new command to love deeper.

John 13:33 *"Love one another; as I have loved you".*

1. Write down who you love and why?

This love is displayed by the God of the Old Testament too. Yet, we don't connect it with love. The Old God disciplined. The Old God got angry. The Old God drove Adam and Eve out of their home for disobeying. Jesus claimed to be the same God but some call him the new God. The new God disciplined Peter and his disciples. The new God threw demons into pigs and drown

them. The new God warned of the wrath to come. The new God drove the money changers from the temple. The old and new God are not that different. We have just been schooled to think so.

Still, there is a love side to Jesus. He asked us to love more. He healed those in need. He gave compassion to those who did not deserve it. Jesus displayed love. I look at the old and new God like this. I could describe my Ex-wife to new people I meet. I could paint a picture of what it was like to live with her and love her. That picture could look like a Rembrandt or a Picasso. Recently, she has remarried. Her new husband could describe her in his words. I bet the description would be quite different from mine. Yet, it is the same woman. Read these verses below for next week and think about how you love.

1. I quoted this verse above. A man asked Jesus about the Ten Commandments. The man was looking for validation in his apparent keeping of the law. Jesus sunk him by adding depth to the Ten Commandments. In this verse (John 13:33) Jesus has just been betrayed by a friend. Yet, Jesus decided to command that we love rather than hate. As a matter of fact, he then predicted that those who said they loved him would abandon him in his time of greatest need. It's not so much that Jesus is love and God the Father is not. Jesus just explains love deeper than we do ourselves.

John 13:33 *"Love one another; as I have loved you".*

2. 1 Corinthians 13 is called the love chapter. I don't think I have read anything that quite matches this description of love. The movie *Meet Joe Black* has a great line. Death asks a man how he knows that he loves his wife. The man says that she knows his deepest rotten character flaws, yet still loves him. That is why he loves her. If we did all the things described in these verses I think we could be the best loving person alive. People would love us for our goodness rather than our flaws.

1 Corinthians 13:1 *"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."*

3. I guess we could call Paul the apostle of love. He wrote 1 Corinthians 13 and the verses here in Galatians 5. Paul loves to write about the God of love. He paints a picture of God as love, Jesus as love, and the Spirit as love. I just know that if we practiced Paul's advice in Galatians we would love better. I wish love was just sex, lust, and gifts. Those are easy and fun to get and give. Yet, real love is hard work. Real love is risky and dangerous.

Galatians 5:22-26 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."*

4. If you read this verse below it is nice and fluffy. Most preachers love to quote the love verse. What they fail to report most of the time is that it's God who loves. Many times, they quote this verse and then say "see Jesus is love." I get it that preachers see Jesus as God and we should too. Yet, the people separate the two far too often as angry and love. Preachers need to be

keepers of the word. That means we keep the verses in context. The New testament says God is love not Jesus is love. What that means is that they both did, have, and will love because they are one yet, two distinct people. We must never forget that.

1 John 4:8 *“Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”*

Ephesians 3:18 *“may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”*

The Jesus Connection

Last week I tried to paint a picture of the Old God of the Old Testament as love. He and Jesus did the same things in love for the people around them. God told Moses he would not enter the promise land for disobeying him. Jesus told Peter “get behind me Satan.” Both seem harsh, yet God is God in both the Old and New Testaments. Didn't I just talk above about Jesus as love? What more of a connection is there?

The connection is simple really. Don't just paint God as mean. Don't just paint Jesus as love. If you made a horrible mistake, what do you look like? Will you forever be tarnished because of one thing? God does not make mistakes but his actions have given him a perception as holy, angry, or mean. Yet, you are more than one decision you have made. God is more than one event in ancient times. To know God better is to study all 66 books. To see God beyond consequences and events that appear to depict Him one way.

It's not fair to paint Jesus as love and not a Jesus of wrath. The Jesus in 34 AD. is setting up his kingdom through twelve Jewish men. His love for all people made his first coming a misunderstood one. They wanted the warrior Jesus, but they God the teacher Jesus. The miracle maker Jesus. They also received the sacrificed Jesus. The ultimate love a person can give is their own life for another. In reality, all the verses we have read today tell a tale of what kind of love God likes. It also tells of what type of love God is. Jesus dying for all, regardless of not deserving this sacrifice, is love in the deepest. Who would die for the undeserving or a stranger? Yes, only the Love of Jesus would and that is the Jesus connection.