

Text: Psalm 116:1-4 Introit
Theme: In Love with God

March 18, 2018

How many of you are in love or know someone who is in love? Although you may be assuming I'm talking about romantic love, I'm actually more interested in those who are in love with their car, with sports, with winning, with their job or maybe not. As those thoughts pass through our minds, we know how to be in love even in a non-romantic way. In the words of the Introit, the Psalmist speaks of being in love with the Lord. As we focus on that thought, we seek to learn how God rekindles our love for Him.

I. In the beginning, God created us to be in love, to be in relationship with Him. A. However, as we already know, we encounter times when we are out of love with our Lord. 1. Sometimes, we are out of love with Him because we feel like God isn't listening. How many of you have had a conversation with someone where you realized the other person wasn't even listening? Sometimes, we feel the same way about God. We pray needing an answer and we hear nothing. We pray a second, third, fourth, or twentieth time and still nothing. Because the answer doesn't arrive via text message within fifteen seconds after we ask, we incorrectly assume God is not listening.

2. Other times, we feel like He's not there when we need Him. If you're over age twenty, you've been there. A crisis occurs and we automatically say, "God where are you? I need You." And then, we proceed to get upset with God because He didn't show up as we expected. But it's not God who doesn't show up. It's us. We're the ones who are in the wrong place, those who feel like God isn't standing next to us. But it's all based on feelings, not facts. Feelings are emotions; feelings are fickle. They come and they go. When we don't feel like God is with us when we need Him, our appreciation dwindles because our motivation is off base.

3. Then, there are times when we are out of love because God could have, but He didn't. God created the world in six days. Are we all in agreement on that. We believe God has unlimited power, that, if He can create the world, He can do anything. Yet, that's where our issues arise. God can, but that doesn't guarantee that God will. As people brought those with all kinds of diseases to Jesus, did He heal all of them? Did He cast out every demon? As confusing as it may be to us, God can, but sometimes, for reasons beyond our understanding, God doesn't. And when God doesn't, it's easy for us to say, "God, You failed me."

B. How, then, does God rekindle our love for Him? 1. God rekindles our love by encouraging us to call on Him. The Psalmist knew the value of calling on God. That's why loving the Lord led him to call on his God. You see, God wants to be in a close relationship with Him. He doesn't need us, but we definitely need Him. Out of love, because He wants us to be in love with Him, to maintain a loving relationship with Him, He invites. Not just once or twice, but continually, daily, He invites us to talk to Him, to share everything with Him, and, as He invites, He waits. He waits for us to respond, to realize His love, to reconnect with the God who loves us all the way to the cross.

2. God rekindles our love by promising to listen. The Psalmist writes, "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice." God not only encourages us to call, but He promises to listen and to respond. Knowing God will listen is what motivates us to

call on Him. Ever remember a time when your parents refused to listen to you? If the situation was like some I recall, they had good reason because all we were doing was whining. But things are so different with God. Not that God wants us to whine, but, whatever the circumstances, God always listens with intensity, with a heart of love, with a heart that says, "What will be the best response to their concern?"

3. God rekindles our love by choosing to step into our situation. When you were facing a crisis as a child, how many times did your parents say, "Go away; don't bother me?" Every parent instinctively knows that crisis means action, that they must do something. The Creator of the universe, the God of unlimited power has chosen, not based on us, but based on His heart, to step into our world, to get involved in our situations, to be God in our crises even though they are like a speck of dust compared to what He does every day to keep this world functioning. As God steps in, He demonstrates His love and with that demonstration, He rekindles our love for Him.

4. God rekindles our love by pointing our hearts toward the cross. How easy it for us to whine and complain, to think that we have it so much worse than everyone else? It's pretty easy, isn't it? But what would happen if we took each situation we faced and compared it to the cross? What would happen to our whine meter? The arrow would drop to zero, wouldn't it? At the cross, we see God's greatest demonstration of love as we witness His only Son dying because of us. As we allow that reality to sink in, our hearts soften. Our frustration with God subsides and we find ourselves prepared to rekindle our treasured relationship with our ever-loving God.

5. God rekindles our love by choosing to forgive no matter what. As a child, how many times did you mess up big time yet your parents still loved you? As children of our heavenly Father, we mess up every day. Sometimes, intentionally, other times, unintentionally, we break God's heart. As He looks at us, He says to Himself, "Why are they so slow to learn?" But immediately after those thoughts go through His mind, He responds in love. As we humble ourselves before Him, as we admit that we messed up, His response is like clock work as He says, with a heart filled with love, "I forgive you. The relationship you interrupted is now repaired because I love you."

6. God rekindles our love by saying, "I am always here for you." How many times have you cried out to God day after day and month after month, year after year and He didn't notice? The answer? Never. When you are experiencing the pinnacle of joy, God is standing beside you. When you are in the trenches, when the trench seems so deep that you can hardly see light as you look up, when you think things will never change, that things will never return to what you once called, "normal," in every one of those situations and any other situation you encounter, God's response is predictable; it's always the same, "I am always here for you because I love you."

7. We can be in love in a lot of different ways and with different people or things, but, in the mind of God, the best words He can hear from us are the four simple, but power-filled words, "I love You, Lord." Amen.