

Text: I John 5:1-4

Theme: He's Looking for Love

May 6, 2018

How many of you have looked for something that you expected to find, something that seemed so obvious, like your shoes, your coat, or your keys, but you couldn't find them? You knew exactly where they should be, but no matter how many times you checked, they simply weren't there? In our text, John reminds us that God is looking for something obvious, something that should be easily found among His people. As we look at the words of our text today, we focus on our theme: He's Looking for Love.

I. Our loving God is looking for love among His people. A. Yet, He often finds a lack of Christian love. 1. He finds a lack of love because we've made love conditional. What does conditional love look like? It looks a lot like a 4-way stop intersection. I'll move when you move, but I'm not going to go first because I don't want to get hit. Conditional love says, "I'm waiting, waiting for you to demonstrate love toward me, waiting for you to make the first move, waiting for you to do x, y, and z. When you do all the right things at the right time, then I'll respond. Then I'll demonstrate Christian love in return." We'd like to think that we've never done that, but it happens.

2. He finds a lack of Christian love because we think they don't deserve it. How many times have you played the deserving game before you offered Christian love? It's easy to think we're justified in playing the game. Yet, how many of us deserve to be loved by someone else? How many of us always do all the right things that would motivate someone else to love us? An even more important question is, "How many of us deserve to be loved by God?" We can play the deserving game because we think we are justified in doing so, but, at the end of the day, we don't deserve to be loved by our loving God, can't possibly earn His love, yet He still chooses to love us.

3. He finds a lack of love because we are too self-focused. We can blame it on our society because society may be partly to blame, but before we do too much blaming, we need to acknowledge that we are the ones who make the choice to love or not love. When we are self-focused, we often practice what we might call selective love. We love only those who meets our needs. As much as God wants us to love others as evidence that we love Him, we fail. We don't measure up to His expectations. In our hurried world, our world of high expectations, we frequently find ourselves focused on our self, focused on survival rather than loving as He loves us.

B. Since God is looking for love, how do we demonstrate Christian love? 1. We demonstrate love by loving God. John writes, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God." Sounds simple enough. Who among us doesn't love God? But loving God is more than surface love. When we love our God with all our heart, mind, and soul, we trust Him implicitly, without question, without debate, without hesitation. When He prompts us to love someone we think doesn't deserve it, we offer love because He says so. Loving God encompasses every aspect of our relationship with our God because it's a love like no other love.

2. We demonstrate love by burying the hatchet. How many of you have ever dug a hole and buried a hatchet? If you think about the process, you know it takes

work. As our God looks for love, He says, "Bury the grudges, the desire for payback, the revenges." The imagery is perfect. Suppose each grudge, each unkind word or action was a blade of grass. If you dug a hole eighteen inches deep and put each blade of grass in that hole, and filled the hole up with dirt, how long would it take before those blades of grass resurfaced? It would never happen, would it? As God looks for love, He says, "Bury those blades of grass and move on!"

3. We demonstrate love by living by faith, not by feelings. What's the difference between faith and feelings? Feelings change quickly based on outward circumstances. Faith is an act of God that does not change. John writes, "This is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." What a powerful and power-filled statement! To overcome this world, to love God with all our hearts, to love one another as He loves us, begins with faith. Faith is our victor, our conqueror. Surrounded by a world that is everything but loving, faith says, "You can do it. Love as He loves you and as you do, you will conquer the world. You will be victorious!"

4. We demonstrate love by practicing ongoing kindness. We know the words, "Love is patient; love is kind." Can you hold a grudge and still be kind toward that person? Can you resent someone and still treat them with kindness? Where there is kindness, all those ill feelings and thoughts must disappear. Kindness and ill feelings of any kind cannot co-exist in the same place at the same time. As God looks for Christian love, He looks for kindness because He knows that when He finds kindness in the true and full sense of the word, He will always find one who has chosen to empty themselves of all those other feelings and actions.

5. We demonstrate Christian love by loving no matter what. In Acts, Peter writes, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality." As Jesus walked the earth, did He love some and not others? Did He show kindness to only select people? Did He only heal certain people based on something about them? Like Christ, Christian love shows no partiality. We love others because He first loved us. As we abide in that love, we love because we know love has no boundaries. In the mind of God, selective love is not love at all. Instead, He says, "Let us love each other in the same way He loves us." When we make that our goal, we will love no matter what.

6. We demonstrate Christian love by going the extra mile. We know the phrase, but what does it actually mean? First, it implies that we went the first mile, that we offered love from square one. But the extra mile takes us one step further as it says, "Love when it's easy to love. And, when circumstances arise where loving isn't always easy, love them anyway. Love because you remember who first loved you." As we go the extra mile, we're not setting ourselves apart from others as self-made heroes. We are simply doing what God called us to do. Go the first mile, and then, because you love your Lord, do the right thing and go the extra mile.

7. Whether you can find your hat or your coat or they seem to up and walk away, remember this: God is always looking. He's always looking for love. Amen.