

1. The Epistle for Easter IV was I Jn. 4:11-16, the passage following our text. The thoughts there are similar to those in this text.
2. Three times in this chapter the readers are addressed as "Beloved," vss. 1, 7 and 11. It is a passive adjective or noun. The readers are loved by God and the Apostle John. It is a good way for a pastor to address his hearers. It reminds them that God takes the initiative. We come to church to hear about what God has done for us. And this causes the correct reaction of service and worship in us. Read vss. 1, 7 and 11 for yourself. In all three cases we have a response from the hearer because of God's love which comes first.
3. Twice we read "God is love" vss. 8 and 16. God is the sum total of all of His qualities and attributes. But the greatest of these is love. We could also say "God is wrath" or "God is justice" but they are not the primary qualities in God. The Word of God teaches us true wisdom. And that wisdom is that "God is love."
4. When man fell into sin he lost his spiritual life. Before man is converted he is spiritually blind, dead and God's enemy. What is left in man of the image of God is imperfect and unreliable. Natural man does love but it is fleeting, selfish and imperfect. Without the love of God man remains hopeless. If there were no God, there would be no love. Three times in our text (vss. 7, 9 and 10) we read "The love of God." It is unique. There is none other like it. But it is available to all in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
5. Vs. 19 which follows our text reads "We love (God) because He first loved us." First the love of God did something for us. And then His love does something in us. That says it all.
6. Our text makes sure that we understand what God's love has done for us. Vs. 9 reads: "In this the love of God has been manifested in us that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world in order that we might live through Him." The active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ has given us eternal life. Vs. 7 tells us that God in His love gave us rebirth. We are alive spiritually, no longer dead in trespasses and sin. Vs. 10 tells us "God Himself loved us and sent His Son as the payment for our sins." Vss. 7 and 10 tell us what God has done for us. And that is love.
7. Our text also makes sure that we understand what God's love does in us. Vs. 7 says "Everyone who loves has been born of God and therefore is acquainted with God." To be acquainted with God means to believe in and trust Him and His Word. Conversely vs. 8 says "He who does not love has not come to know God." That means he is still dead in his sins and does not trust God or believe in Him. Vs. 10 makes very plain that love, spiritual life, did not begin with us. Can a dead man show life? Of course not. The spiritually dead man cannot know God or believe in Him. Furthermore, vs. 12 reads "Beloved if (as is the case) God loved us so much, we ought to love one another." I am obligated to love other people. Rom. 13:8 reads "Owe no one anything except to love one another." I do not have a choice in this matter. I am obligated to love other people. To sum up: What has God's love done in us? Two things: 1) It causes us to believe and trust in Him, and 2) It lays the obligation of loving other people on us. In the prayer following communion we say: "Give us faith toward Thee and fervent love to one another."
8. Read Mt. 22:34-40. There Jesus says that all of Scripture hangs on two commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind. Love your neighbor as yourself." To love the Lord with heart, soul and mind means to believe Him and trust in Him or to know Him, as our text says. To love one's neighbor means to do for him what you do for yourself. That is the story of the Bible. That is the life of the church and all of its members. Oh Lord, give us faith toward You and fervent love for one another!! Slava Bogu.

Theme: WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US

Introduction: This theme is taken from vs. 19 of I Jn. 4. This is likely a better translation than "We love Him because etc." The word "Him" is lacking in some ancient manuscripts. According to our theme all of man's love, whether toward God or man, is caused only by the love of God. Unconverted man does not know the love of God and therefore does not know God. He fears God but does not love Him.

I-What He Has Done For Us

Vss. 9-10 tell us what God has done for us.

A-He gave us life. Vs. 9 reads: "In this has been manifested the love of God in us that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world in order that we might live through Him (Jesus)." If the Father sent His Son so that man might have life, man must be dead. And so he is. Many times the Bible tells us that unconverted man is spiritually dead. He has no true knowledge and appreciation of things divine. He is lost in his sins and ignorance. He is selfish and arrogant. At Jn. 10:10 Jesus says: "I have come in order that they might have life and have it abundantly." Jn. 3:16 promises the believer everlasting life. Eph. 2:5 tells us that although we were dead in our sins God has made us alive in Christ. He has raised us and placed us in heavenly places in Christ. Through baptism God bestowed life on us, both spiritual and eternal.

B-He sent His Son as a payment for our sins. Vs. 10 reads: "In this is love not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a payment for our sins." Jn. 2:2 tells us: "Jesus is the payment for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." John the Baptist said: "Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." Jn. 1:29. If God sent His Son to give me everlasting life and to wipe out my sins, surely He loves me dearly. That is why vss. 8 and 16 say: "God is love." Without Him there is no love. Seek love only in God and His Son.

II-What He Has Done In Us

Vss. 7 and 11 tell us what God has done in us.

A-He gave me faith to believe in Him. Vs. 7 reads: "Everyone who loves is born of God and therefore is acquainted with Him." The NT is full of information about the second birth, conversion. For example, in II Cor. 5 we read: "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. All things are new." Jesus said in His talk with Nicodemus "Unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." I Pet. 1:23 tells us that we are born again not of seed that perishes but of imperishable seed, the Word of God Who lives and abides forever." Vs. 7 of our text tells us that this re-birth causes us to love God and become acquainted with Him. To love God means to trust in Him as our highest good. To be acquainted with Him means to be spiritual and to think spiritual things. You can find all of this nowhere else but in the love of God where-with He loved us and gave us His only Son to redeem us.

B-He gave me the strength to love my neighbor. Vs. 7 reads: "Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God." That means: "Draw on the love of God which comes to you in the Gospel." And vs. 11 of our text reads: "Beloved, if God loved us so much (and He did) then we also must love one another." Notice that both vss. which speak about Christians loving each other begin with "Beloved." Why? Because only those who are already loved can love. John is saying: "The love of God causes you to love each other." At II Cor. 5:14 we read: "For the love of Christ constrains us." Read on in that passage for yourself.

Conclusion: God is love. Without Him there is no love. His love in Christ gave me rebirth and new life. That causes me to trust in God and love my neighbor.