



## Intro to 1 John 4:7-21

Sunday, June 7, 2020  
Pastor Don Denyes

American churches have a long and complicated history with racism. Martin Luther King noted what many have since echoed, that the most segregated hour in American life is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. Now, there are many possible reasons for this. And it can be difficult to discern since we, as individuals, typically lack self-awareness. How much more do we lack self-awareness as communities!

But one safe answer (though by far not the only one) is that we have forgotten the nature of love. Love is a divine attribute. It originates with Him. It is not something that we are free to define. It is not something that we are free to set limits on. As Dwight Handspike shared from the Good Samaritan story (Luke 10:25-37), we ought not seek to define “neighbor,” so that we can justify ourselves and be confident that we are living righteously. Rather, we ought to understand *how* a neighbor should love another. Neighbor-love according to the Bible has to do with seeing the needs of people around you and seeking to meet them to the best of your ability. To be sure, we are not going to love perfectly. But part of repentance is pressing on and loving people in our community that have needs in any way we can.

## Context

The book of 1 John is largely concerned with the issue of loving one another. Loving one another becomes a key litmus test for examining ourselves to know if we are really children of God. We know we are saved because we “have the Son of God,” and the way we know we have Him is that we love others as He loves. This is a direct affirmation of what Jesus told His disciples at the Last Supper: that all people will know we are His disciples when we love one another the way He loved us.

## **Read and Reflect** (*Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.*)

Read 1 John 4:7-21

“Love’s Directions”

- Downward... descending to us
  
- Upward... reciprocating from us
  
- Inward... maturing in us
  
- Outward... flowing from us

## Discuss

- 1) Why do you think love is so important to us as human beings?
- 2) According to this passage, how do we know that God loves us?
- 3) What prohibits us from loving others the way God loves us?
- 4) Pastor Don mentioned we are “participants in the drama of redemption.” In other words, our love as Christians becomes the means by which others experience the love of God. How does that impact the seriousness of this command to love one another?
- 5) How do we overcome our temptation to not love the way we are commanded to, especially in the area of racial reconciliation?