

“Coming Into Agreement With Love”

Introduction

- Continuing our series: Making Spirits Bright
 - As we get closer to Christmas and focus on the birth of 8 pounds, 6 ounce baby Jesus,
 - Love =language of Heaven
 - So what's the music of heaven? What's the voice of the Father that every human's heard, at least in muffled form, and every human can copy, at least in mangled form? Love. Love is the music of heaven. When we love, no matter how awkwardly, we hum an anthem sung perfectly, all day, every day, in heaven.
 - Today focusing on the music of Heaven: LOVE, and Biblical truth “God is Love”
 - # 1 characteristic, around which every other belief is centered per Wesley / UMC

God is Love:

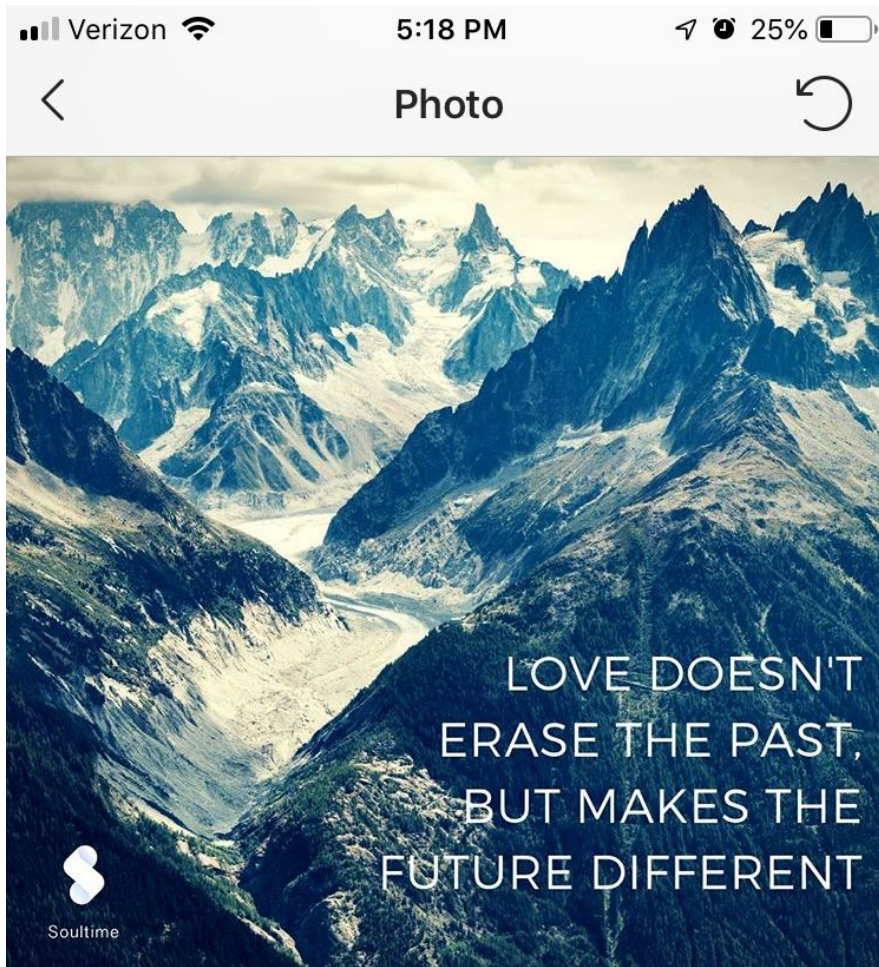
- Different angle than other denominations
- Wesleyan theology: what we do stems from love we've encountered, not fear

1 John 4:7-12

7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

- Godly version of Love is different than worldly love
- **Worship Note:** God's love is different than wordly love.
- John 3:16 - love is sacrifice
 - So God so loved the world he gave His only begotten son: Incarnation; Christmas
 - Tie into Christmas; starts out in a manger, ends up on a Cross
- God loves you - you need to come into agreement with that love
 - Agreement = accord, acceptance, consent, acquiesce
- Obstacles to 'coming into agreement with God's love for you'

- World has taught you you're unlovable or unworthy of love
- No grid/reference for the unconditional, agape love of God
 - Ministering Illustration



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bob.hasson Love this from Danny Silk! Instead of becoming a victim of their painful experiences and recreating them in their own families and organizations, people of honor allow love to transform their story. They chose to be powerful in seeking healing and learning how to live in relational wholeness—not just for themselves, but for many others.



- **Greatest need in the world today is for people to accept God's love for themselves**
- **Believe it for others, but often don't believe it for ourselves**
 - **Ask about if God loves the person next to them**
 - **Ask does God love you**

When we come into agreement with God's love, that love lives in, and then we need to Come into agreement with the Love that resides in each of us in order to love others

11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

- **"God lives in us and is made complete in us" - need to 'agree' with it**
- **Godly version of "Loving" is different than worldly love**
 - **God's love is different, and often difficult**
 - **Loving someone doesn't mean agreeing with all of their choices**
 - **Not called to just love those who love you - 'that's easy'**
 - **Or to love and serve those from whom you can expect a return - 'even sinners do that'**

Luke 6:27-36 New International Version (NIV) - Love for Enemies

27 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full

.35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Worship Note: God's love is more difficult than wordly love.

- Hardest thing to do in the world - love someone who hates you and who slanders you and lies about you and shoots arrows from close range - but God isn't making a 'suggestion' when he says to love them; it's a command expected to be followed by those who claim to love God...to love in this way is to be obedient
 - Once we've come into agreement with God's love FOR US, we need to Come into agreement with God's love IN US (that enables us to love others)
 - We can love in this way because God's love resides in us, for His Spirit resides in us
 - We can love because God first loved us.
 - By doing so, God's love is being shown and offered to them
 - Jesus is being offered to them
 - Wonder, "Why would you do that, you hate me?"
 - Only one possible answer; Jesus' love lives in me, and Jesus loves you
 - By loving them, they are able to hear a few bars of the music of heaven, which they may not have heard for some time, and they themselves can begin to move towards agreeing with the love made available to them
 - *Martin Luther King, Jr.* "Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."
 - Amazon example of sending and receiving packages.
 - Amazon has a unique way of looking at the world. They operate with a deep conviction that everyone in the world should have the ability to send and receive packages. God may not be all too concerned about packages being delivered on time, but the scriptures make it clear that God desires all people to receive the message of salvation and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4). God operates with a deep conviction that everyone should have the ability to send and receive eternal hope! What is God's distribution plan? Simply put—God's people! This reality means the church may need to take a few notes from Amazon's commitment to send well.
- Lots of folks are sending and receiving gifts.

- God has given us the best gift in Jesus.
- Through our love, we give the gift of Jesus to others; we are God's distribution plan.

Christmas is one of those times when we find ourselves around certain people we have a hard time loving, and let's be honest, some of those are family members. When you just want to punch them (per Brent), remember God's love lives in you...God's love lives in you, and God isn't making a 'suggestion' when he says to love them; it's a command expected to be followed by those who claim to love God...to love in this way is to be obedient

Worship Note: God calls us to distribute divine love.

Closing

- Come into agreement for God's love for you
- Come into agreement with God's love in you (that enables you to love others)

Below is just too think about for next year possibly...

Title	Scripture	Synopsis
<i>What Difference Does Christmas Make?</i>	Luke 1:46-55	Mary sings out <i>the Magnificat</i> in praise of what God is up to with Christmas and the difference it makes personally, globally and devotionally.
<i>How Do I Escape the Christmas Trappings?</i>	Luke 1:67-79	The trappings of Christmas only point to a broader reality of ours in being trapped or enslaved that Zechariah prophetically sings out in praise of God seeing and working to redeem us in sending Christ for us.

<p><i>What Do I Do with My Heartache At Christmas?</i></p>	<p>Luke 2:21-35</p>	<p>Much of our heartache at Christmas is the realization of asking, "How long?" How long until that relationship is healed? How long until my loneliness is abated and my pain ceases? Thus, it is a heartache of waiting that Simeon helps us to see how Christmas relieves in our waiting until God fully resolves what we're waiting for.</p>
<p><i>How Can I Be A Gift At Christmas?</i></p>	<p>Matthew 2:1-12</p>	<p>Since the wise men were the only ones who gave gifts at the first Christmas, they are the ones who can show us how we can be a gift beyond giving. What set them apart from everyone else is that they were actually looking when no one else was, and so they were able to give and be a gift when no one else would.</p>
<p><i>How Can I Enjoy Christmas?(Christmas Eve sermonette)</i></p>	<p>Luke 2:14</p>	<p>Though we all valiantly attempt to enjoy Christmas, true enjoyment comes in seeing how our mess of Christmas is actually the reason we have Christmas in the first place. God sent Christ for our joy in the midst of our chaos, of which our experience of Christmas is only the tip of the iceberg.</p>

A Family Outing to the Apple Orchard: The Ideal Versus the Real

In family life and in church life, there's always a huge gap between the *ideal* and the *real*. For example, every autumn my family likes to go apple picking.

Here's the *ideal* day of apple picking. The leaves are golden and rusty, the sky is beautiful, and it's 75 degrees. We all pile into the van and start singing and laughing as we merrily drive to the orchard. We arrive early in the morning with plenty of time to enjoy the orchard. Surprisingly, the folks at the apple orchard say, "Today apples are free for families." So our kids guzzle apple cider and stuff themselves with apple donuts—and they don't even get a sugar high! Finally, after a perfect day at the orchard, we drive home as our children keep saying, "Wow, thanks, Mom and Dad!"

But the *real* day often looks like this. It's a disaster from the start. We leave at least two hours late. The apple orchard closes at 5 P.M., we're leaving at 3 P.M., and it takes an hour-and-half to get there, but I bark at everyone, "We're going, so get in the car!" We missed lunch because we were scrambling to get everything done. With blood sugar levels plummeting, my wife and I start arguing. I think it's her fault that we're leaving late; she says it's my fault. We keep arguing until the kids interrupt because now they're arguing with each other. I turn around and snap at the kids, "Knock it off! I'm arguing with your mom."

When we pull into the apple orchard, we only have thirty minutes before closing time. So we tell the kids, "Hurry up, so you can have some fun." By this time of the day all the good apples are gone, and nothing is free. The entrance fee was outrageous because they know they can rip off suburban families who are trying to pretend they're in the country for the day. When we get the kids back in the van, it's already dark. On the way home, we finally get our apples: we stop at McDonald's for an apple turnover.

Unfortunately, family life and church life aren't always ideal. That's why we have to practice love, acceptance, and forgiveness in the midst of real community among real fellow-sinners.

*Stewart Ruch, from sermon "Shaping the World of Each Child," at Church of the Resurrection,
Wheaton, Illinois*