Curious Faith – Does God Love me? 070724

**Intro** – Last message in this series Curious Faith where we have been asking questions and wondering why God does or doesn’t do certain things. and next week come back because the next series is going to be so practical – Mouth Management. Who needs some mouth management? It might be a little prickly – because we need it. We are going to talk about things like complaining, criticizing, lying, and gossiping. Ouch Ouch…help us lord we want to bless people with out words ! Life and death are in the power of the tongue the bible says…..

But that’s next week – for today lets look at John 3:16, and as we look at God’s Word today, and this familiar scripture for many of us - I want us to hear this like we are hearing it for the very, very first time. Scripture says this, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son," Jesus. They called him Emmanuel, which means God with us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whosoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have eternal life." For God So loved the world.

I grew up with a very strong confidence/belief that God did love the world. My problem is, I didn’t know that God loved me. I actually didn’t understand how personal His love is. Can any of you relate? When you think about the things that you know that you've done, and the things that you've said and the thoughts that you have thought, maybe you're a little bit like me and you wonder, "How could God love someone like me after all the people I've hurt and all the things I've said and done wrong?" If you ever wonder about God's love. Today, we want to try to answer the question. "Does God Love Me?"

Pray - Father, we ask that you would open up Heaven and reveal your love to us, that we could be changed by your grace, by your power and by your unconditional love, so that we can share your love with others, because of your son, Jesus Amen.

I think when we are not sure of God's love for us, it's very likely its because we are thinking of the wrong kind of love. There are several different types of love. And I want to talk today about two types for the sake of this message.

The first one, is this, there is a type of love that loves because the object is valuable. There's a love that loves because the object is worthy of love. This is the most common type of love. You might love your home or something specific like your kitchen or countertops. Or you love your mom, or you love your purse, you love your shoes. You love your shoes, cause every time you wear them, people say, "Oh, those are cool shoes. Mike and Jake both love shoes and they love playing golf. There is a love that loves because the object is valuable.

The problem is some of us never feel valuable. Worthy. Many of us don’t feel like we measure up to our own expectations, much less, the expectations of God.

Another type of love is a love that loves and gives value to the object. It's a love that loves not because the object is valued, but it gives value to that object. Let me explain it this way. Think about your favorite childhood cuddle toy. Your cuddle toy, most everyone had one. It might've been a bear. It might've been a monkey. It might've been a rabbit. It might've been a blankie or a doll. Here's what I'm guessing about your cuddle toy. Most of you probably gave it a name. How many have you named your cuddle toy? And what I also know about your cuddle toy is that, it probably wasn't perfect. Chances are, it was very, very flawed. I'm guessing it might've had a hole in it or you might've torn it. I actually don’t remember mine but I do remember 2 of my dtr’s . Jennifer had a bear. And it was torn and stinky and sewed in different places because she took it everywhere – Mr. Bear and finally we had to buy another one so when we washed it she still had one but she never liked the second one as much. My daughter – Janessa – she is 28 now she had a doll named Miranda and I think she was missing fingers because she chewed them off. Seriously

Even though your toy wasn't perfect. And even though it was flawed, what did you do? You loved your toy. Can you think of your toy? Visualize it. Here's what's crazy about Mr. Bear, there was nothing valuable about Mr. bear or Miranda. They weren’t expensive. They weren’t a collector's item. They didn't do any tricks. Some of your bears and dolls now they do tricks. You pull a string and they like, say your name like, "I love you." Hers didn't do that. Her bear, if I tried to sell it in the Joy Church yard sale, it wouldn't bring a quarter towards the kids and youth going to camp, but Jen loved Mr. Bear and Janessa loved Miranda.

How do we know how much God loves us? Romans 5:8, says, "God showed us..." Scripture says, "God demonstrates... He displays his own love for us in this," while we were still rag dolls, while we were still sinning, while we were disobeying and breaking the heart of God, he still displayed his love for us, "While we were sinners, Christ died for us." And that's why I want us to hear it like we've never heard it before, and maybe feel it like you've never felt before. Not just here in your mind, but lets feel it and believe it in our hearts, that our God loves you with an unconditional immeasurable love. It's the kind of love that doesn't look for what's worthy in an object, but it's a kind of love that gives worth to that object. Our God doesn't love you because you're worthy, but God's love makes you worthy. That's how good he is. That's how powerful he is. It's his grace, it's his goodness. And because love isn't just an action, it's not just what God does, but its His essence. It's exactly who he is. And scripture tells us that in, 1 John 4, the Bible says that "He is love, God is love." Vs 16 That's what he is, is not just what he does, it's who he is. God is love. And watch this, "This is how God showed his love among us, He sent his one and only son." "He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him," "This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." This verse is ridiculously powerful, but it is way more powerful when you think about who wrote it.

Let’s, play a little Bible trivia just for fun? If you want to play, say, "I'll play." You want to play? If Sherry Mullin was here she would be all over this game.

- Here's the question. This verse is found in 1st John, are you ready for this? Who do you think wrote the book of 1st John? The answer is John, this isn't a trick question, okay? This is John. Just to be clear, this isn't John the Baptist, he was in heaven by this time, this was John who had a brother named James. And if you don't know, they were disciples, and they were not what we would call disciple material. These guys didn't graduate top of their class, they weren't on the best behaved list. They were rough. They were loud. They cussed up a storm probably. They were what we might call fishermen with a reputation. They had a nickname, but their nickname was not the Bible brothers. These two guys were known as the sons of Thunder. That's just cool. I know we have some motorcycle people here. I'm seeing Harley's and guys dressed in leather and we don't know for sure what they did to earn that title, but we get a glimpse of why they were called the sons of thunder in Luke 9.

Luke 9, Jesus was coming into town and the people, they weren't kind to Jesus, they didn't welcome Jesus. Luke 9:54, here's what happened, "When the disciples, James and John, when the sons of Thunder saw this, they asked the Lord, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" That's the sons of thunder. This was a guy, he didn't just start the fights, he finished them. This was the dad like some of you that got kicked out of all of his kids soccer games, okay? This was the one that always caused trouble and found trouble wherever he went. And then one day, John started spending time with Jesus. And every moment of every day, even though John didn't do anything to earn the love of Jesus. And even though there was no way he could ever deserve the love of Jesus, Jesus simply loved John.

 And we don't know when it happened. It probably took some time, but little by little, John's identity, the way he saw himself started to change. How do we know? Because three times in his gospel, John referred to himself as, "The one that Jesus loved." Three times, he called himself, "The one that Jesus loved." No longer, the son of thunder, no longer John the hothead, no longer John the screw up, but he was the one that Jesus loved. And I believe with all my heart that God wants me to tell somebody, no matter what your parents said about you, or no matter how somebody else made you feel, or no matter well where you fell short or no matter what you thought, or no matter what you said, or no matter what you did, **you are the one Jesus loves**. You are the one. Don't just hear it in your mind, feel it in your heart. You are the one Jesus loved. Jesus said, "If a shepherd has 100 sheep and one of them wanders away, the good shepherd leaves the 99," why? Because he loves the missing one. I don't know exactly who this is for, but I want you to hear it and I want you to feel it. You are the one that Jesus loves. You are God’s favorite as Mike preached a couple years ago. My friend Judi took that phrase with her and I believe when she passed away from cancer a year and a half ago she knew that she knew that she knew. She was the one that Jesus Loved.

It doesn't matter what you did. It doesn't matter how dark you feel. It doesn't matter the regrets that you carry or the shame that you endure, you are still the one Jesus loves.

Right now, those of you watching online, those of you watching three years from now, those of us in the room. What I want you to do is, I want you to close your eyes for just a minute. I want you to feel it. And I want you to say it. Just say it very softly, say, "I am the one..." Say it, "I am the one that Jesus loves."

Everybody say, "I am the one that Jesus loves." Now, altogether with your eyes closed. Just kind of feel it right now and just say it in one sentence together, "I am the one that Jesus loves." This isn't a statement of pride. This is a statement of truth. That's how good God is. He's here. And he's loving you. He's actively loving you in this moment.

 Worship - And the amazing thing about our God is this, that our God didn't shout his love from heaven, but he showed his love on earth, when the Mary, a Virgin gave birth to a son and they called him Jesus, He is the savior who will save people from their sins. Sin is not a very popular word in our culture today. Sin simply means missing the mark. It means falling short of God's standard, and we've all done it and do it. I've done it too many times to count. And so have you. And this is the very reason why we don't feel worthy. We feel unworthy of God's love, because we know that we've sinned against God. And there is a God who loves you with a different kind of love. This is not a love that loves because the object is valuable, but this is the kind of love that gives value to the one that it loves.

You are the one, you are the one. Whatever you did, let it go. Shame, the pain, the regret. He still loves you.

Those of you who have children, remember when you held them for the first time and then the next 100 times over the next few months – ooh the love you could feel for the first time so deep, like you would do anything for this tiny human, so much love in your heart it hurt, it made you tear up or sob uncontrollably. And they just slept and pooped and cried. God is saying to us - Do we really think your capacity to love your children supersedes MY love for you?

I pray today that you would be convinced, "That neither death nor life, neither angels, nor demons, neither the present, nor the past, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation would be able to separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:38-39 I remember hearing this verse for the first time and not understanding it really. And then I remember – hearing it again and feeling it so deeply – Nothing can separate you Kathy from my Love. Nothing

Pray - Father, we ask today that our hearts would be open to your love. If you are here in the room or you're watching online, as you're praying today, if you are a follower of Jesus, you're a Christian, and maybe you have some family members or some friends that do not know the love of God. If you'd like to lift them before God today, just say a prayer. Maybe God might give you the chance to show them that love. Father, we just pray right now, that those that we know that don't know you, would be open to the work of your Holy Spirit. God, give us the chance to show your goodness, to show your love. God, we may invite them to church, may we just be a witness, may we may be very bold. Give us wisdom and give us the words to say. We ask God that you would do what only you can do to reveal your love, your loving kindness that draws us into repentance, that we could experience your love, your goodness, your grace and your life.

As we keep praying today, some of you may be in a place where you feel the weight of what you've done wrong. "How could God love someone like me?" Remember the love of God isn't based on your goodness, but its based on who God is, and he's love. And his love is very different than the love you see in this world. His love is a love that gives value to the object. You are so valuable, that God sent his son, Jesus, born of a Virgin, who did not inherit the sin nature from an earthly father, but the heavenly nature from a heavenly Father, Jesus, the lamb of God. Who loved us while we were sinning and gave his life, died in our place and rose from the dead so that anyone and this includes you, who calls on the name that is above every name, He will forgive your sins and he will make you brand new. You are the one that Jesus loves,. And as we call on the name of Jesus, He hears our prayers, He forgives our sin, and He makes us brand new. No matter what you've done, no matter how bad it feels, you are the one that Jesus loves. If you want to receive His love, you can surrender and give your life to Jesus. And you can do that today, right now. would you just pray aloud? Nobody prays alone, pray out loud after me….

Pray,

Heavenly Father...

Thank you for your love.

I receive it.

Jesus, forgive my sins.

Save me.

Make me brand new.

Fill me with your Spirit.

So I can know your love.

And show your love.

Thank you for new life.

 I give you all of mine.

 In Jesus name, I pray.