



The Mar Thoma Church Diocese of North America & Europe Christian Education Forum

Lenten Meditations

GOD IS LOVE

1 John 4 :7-20

The First Epistle of John is an attempt to explain the nature of God to early Christians who are grappling with questions about the nature of God. God is not merely a theoretical-abstract spirit (transcendent) but God is present in the world. The historical presence of God was experienced through Jesus of Nazareth. However, the problem that the epistle is highlighting is something that we grapple with today.

1.) Love transforms our knowledge of God from the theoretical to the existential-practical

The writer of the epistle is explicit. Love is from God. It is through “loving” that we know God. The knowledge of God in this sense is not a theoretical knowledge of God but a practical and existential experience of God. It is the experiential taste of love that is of and from God that calls us to love for our brothers and sisters. Since the first century, theologians have offered their interpretation on the difference shades and words used for the word “love.” These interpretations range from the Hebrew word Hesed (loving kindness) to the Greek words Philos (brotherly love,) Eros (erotic-sensual love,) Storge (compassionate love) and Agape (sacrificial love.) The discussions and number of sermons about “love” have taken up so much space in the history of Christian discourse that we must question why the church has had difficulty in translating our theoretical knowledge into practical action.

2.) Love shapes mission through action

The sacrificial love exemplified by Christ is a call to action: a call to solidarity with those who have not experienced love. The world is facing a “love deficit.” However, the quests for meaning and love have not died. These quests have been transformed into the pursuit of wealth and virtual relationships. The quests for wealth and relationships without sacrifice have now taken a superficial turn. The church is called to bear witness to sacrificial love. The giving nature of this love is what Paul speaks about in the process of kenosis or the self-emptying of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2) is what differentiates the Christian understanding of meaning and love from the secular understanding of meaning and love. The mission of the church is to love sacrificially and this sacrificial love challenges the church to pour out its very life for enabling the existence of the world. It is through bearing witness to this self-emptying and sacrificial understanding of love that the church engages mission through action

Prayer: Quiet our hearts and minds of Lord to reflect on your divine love.

Transform our hearts and minds Oh Lord, to live out our call to witness your divine love. Renew our hearts and minds of Lord, so that we may spread your divine love.
Amen.

Rev. Manoj V Zacharia

*“Beloved, let us love one another,
because love is from God; everyone who
loves is born of God and knows God.”*

1 John 4:7