

You Are Loved
I John 7-11, 19
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
March 9, 2025
Rev. Jill Cameron Michel

Some of you have heard me mention this before...when my children were young I wrote a blog called, "Clearest Glimpse of God." My "about me" section reads: *I am a mother and minister who can't help but ask questions about how our faith and parenting intersect with each other...in ways we realize and in many, many ways we might never think about. I also can't help but believe that we parents are the clearest glimpse of God our children have in their early lives ([Clearest Glimpse of God](#)).*

So, as you can hear, it was a blog about God, about parenting, and more often than that description indicates, about how our children, too, show us who God is.

The very first post I wrote back in 2010 was titled "What If..."

This is what I said:

Here is a realization I keep making over and over again...

We parents are the clearest glimpse of God our children have right now. ...

*Now, let's be [honest]...some days we show them who God is more clearly than others...some days we are better and closer to being who God asks us to be for them.
Some days...not so much. Some days the way we represent God to our children is less than faithful.*

But, what would happen if in our parenting we kept this reality in the forefront of our minds?

What if as we were driving our children to school (late, as usual) we remembered that all we do shows them God?

What if as we heard hateful words shared between our children (more often than we'd like to hear) we responded from the heart of God?

What if as we expressed our frustration with our spouse we remembered that our children who are playing in the next room would hear God's voice in our own?

What if at all times we kept asking, "What are my children learning about God by the way I am living?"

What if... ([Clearest Glimpse of God: What if...](#))

I still believe these are important questions. I could write that post again today.

But as I read it, I realized that I think one thing is missing. There is another "what if..." question that rolls around in my heart and my mind.

What if we saw ourselves as God does?

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Sit with that.

What if we - each of us, no matter how young or how old, no matter whether we are actively parenting or have never had the title parent, no matter what demographic descriptors we claim for ourselves - what if we saw ourselves through God's eyes and truly believed the claims that God makes about us?

As has already been mentioned in worship, throughout the season of Lent we are going to be remembering whose we are. And, yes, hear that word - we are not talking about who we are, but whose we are...that we belong to God. So each week we will explore a different aspect of what it means to be claimed by God and what God's claim says about us, what it says about who we innately are, at our core.

Our scripture reading today came from I John. These are familiar words to many of us, but also words in which we can find ourselves tangled. We read this passage and it is not unusual for us to ask big theological questions.

We talk about loving others - the joys and the challenges of it. And in this passage, we talk about the pressure to do it well.

We read verses 9 and 10 and we can spend hours talking about what it means that God sent Jesus and the church has spent generations debating atonement theology.

But sometimes we miss what is at the heart of this passage, really at the heart of our faith - the reminder that God loves us.

Did you hear it?

Verse 11 says, "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another" (I John 4:11, NRSV).

Verse 19 says, "We love because [God] first loved us" (I John 4:19, NRSV).

We hear both of these and often go directly to that place where we feel the pressure to love others. And that is important. But let us not forget where it comes from.

Again, in verse 11, it says, "since God loved us so much."

"Since God loved us so much."

In all our conversations about love...in all our pressure to love...in all our guilt when we don't feel like we are loving well...in all our anger when others aren't loving well...what we often neglect in the midst of all of that is the love that is rooted in our very being - the love of God that simply is.

Friends, it thrills me that we are outward focused. I love that you are a congregation of people who care about the world, who fight for justice, who show compassion, who share what you have. And there is plenty of need for all of those things these days.

But sometimes, and this is what we are going to do throughout Lent, sometimes we need to carve out space to turn inward, to allow ourselves to be cared for, and to remember what's at the core of our being...to remember whose we are.

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Recently, those of you who worship here onsite at the church saw affirmations and encouragements posted around the sanctuary. Some were reminders about how to be in relationship with other people saying things like “smile at someone today” and “spread joy.” Some were simply affirmations of who you are. “You matter.” “You’re doing amazing!” One even said, “Nice haircut!”

But Kara pointed something out to me. While there were a few that said, “You are loved”, there was one that said “You are love.”

We often say that about God - God is love. But what if we say it about ourselves, too? What if we claim that the essence of who we are is love. What if we believed in love as part of our being, not just as something we do?

Friends, God loves you. Hard stop. No exceptions. No matter what. And you are love. And these two statements are more deeply connected than we might often realized.

It doesn’t mean you are perfect, but it does mean that at the core, before anything else can be said about your identity, there is love.

Rick Morley writes, “God loves us, because we are [God’s]. On days when we make [God] proud, on days when we get on [God’s] every last nerve, on days we fail to live up to even the most basic Christian expectations. [God] loves us still. Despite it all. Through it all. We are [God’s] ([swaddled and squinting – a reflection on 1 John 4:7-21 | rick morley](#))

What if we took that to heart?

What if we really believed in our own belovedness, that love was at our core, was part of who we are?

Throughout Lent we are going to give you an affirmation each week. If you worshiped with us on Ash Wednesday, you heard us talk about this. I will keep encouraging you to find a mirror in your home and to actually post your affirmation on it. Perhaps you’ll write it with a wipe off marker or use a sticky note. But I encourage you to look yourself in the eye whenever you look in the mirror and repeat that affirmation.

So, this week, as Laura invited the children to do, look in your mirror and say to yourself, “I am loved.” Claim this truth. For this is who God created you to be. Amen