

“He Loved You First”  
(1 John 4:19)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning,

We were considering that we should seek Jesus,

But that we must seek Him for the right reasons.

We don't want – as those Jews – to seek Him for loaves –

For the things we may hope to gain

From Him of the world –

The things He tells us not to love (1 John 2:15-16).

Instead, we need to seek Him

For the food that doesn't perish –

For eternal life,

For the rich spiritual blessings

That are in Christ alone.

B. Preview.

This evening,

We want to consider why there are any

Who seek Him for these blessings.

Why some are willing to set aside

What they can see and touch of the things of this world,

For the things they can't see and touch  
But can only read about in God's Word.

Why there are those today who trust Jesus,  
Who love and worship God,  
And who desire to love their brothers and sisters in Christ  
And their neighbor as themselves.

In other words, we'll want to consider again  
Why we love God,  
While others do not?

John tells us in our passage,  
"We love, because He first loved us."

It's not because of us.

It's not because when God offered His Son to us

That we loved and received Him –

It's because out of His love

He first moved us to love Him.

1. In eternity.

2. And in time.

## II. Sermon.

### A. He loved you first in eternity.

He says to His people in Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

God existed in eternity, when you didn't.

He was the only One around that could love.

And He clearly says through Jeremiah,

If you love Him now,

It's because He loved you then.

Paul tells us the same thing in Romans 8:29-30:

His love was the reason for your personal salvation,

“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

If you love Jesus now,

If your life expresses that love

In faith and repentance,

If you're turning from your sins

And following Him in what He calls you to do –

Then you have been *called* –

Paul means here

That you've not only heard God's outward call in the Gospel,

But that you've received the inward call of His Holy Spirit –

That change He works in your heart

That enables you to respond to the Gospel in faith.

If you've received this call,

Paul says it's because you were predestined:

God determined to make you like Jesus –

To form His nature in you,

To give you His heart and His mind,

By giving you His Spirit.

And if you have been predestined,

Paul also tells you why:

It's because God has loved you from all eternity.

That's what he means

When he says that God has foreknown you.

Foreknowing isn't simply knowing

Who you would be,

What you would be like,

Or what you would do –

It isn't a matter of His knowing in advance

That you would receive Jesus

When He was offered to you in the Gospel –

Because, as we'll be reminded in a few moments,

Apart from His grace,

*He knows* all you would have done

Is hate Him and His Son to your grave.

Foreknowing means to forelove –

To love you before you were born,  
 Before you came into existence,  
 Before God created anything.

God foreloved you –  
 He set His affection on you in Christ in eternity,  
 Before He made time,  
 Before He made this world.

He loved you because that's what was in His heart to do –  
 Not because of anything you would do.

The Puritan Thomas Brooks writes, "The only ground of God's love is His love.  
 The ground of God's love is only and wholly in Himself. There is neither  
 portion nor proportion in us to draw His love. There is no love nor loveliness in  
 us that should cause a beam of His love to shine upon us."

His love is what moved Him  
 To make a way for you to be good,  
 That He might be able to love you.

The Puritan John Robinson writes, "Love in the creature ever presupposes some  
 good, true or apparent in the thing loved, by which that affection of union is  
 drawn. But the love of God on the contrary, causes all good to be produced in  
 the creature. He first loves us in the free purpose of His Will, and thence works  
 good for us and in us."

The reason we love anyone  
 Is because there's something beautiful in that person  
 That draws our heart out to it –

Whether real or imagined.

But God loved you when there was nothing good in you –

When there was nothing in you but sin.

He sent His Son into the world to save you,

To give you eternal life in Him,

Because He loved you.

He predestined you to become like His Son,

Because He loved you.

He has always loved you and He always will,

Because God can never change.

That God loved you *first*,

Is also how you can know

He will never stop loving you –

Because His love has its foundation in Him and not in you.

Robinson continues, “And hence comes the unchangeableness of God’s love towards us, because it is founded in Himself, and in the stableness of the good pleasure of His own Will. And although we may be comforted as we observe our love to Him, yet it is far greater comfort drawn from the consideration of His love to us; as being not only the ground of the other, but in Him also infinite, and unchangeable. And, hereupon, it was that the sisters of Lazarus seeking help for their sick brother sent Christ word, not that he, who loved Him, but that “he whom He loved, was sick.”

Because God has always loved you,

Because there are no boundaries to His love,

And because it will never change,  
 You can know He will always love you.

This is how you can be sure of your salvation –  
 Not that you loved God,  
 But that He loved you.  
 “We love, because He first loved us.”

B. Second, He also loved you first in time.

The fact that God loved you in eternity –  
 Before you were created or born –  
 Means that He loved you first.

But the same applies to time:  
 He loved you before you loved Him.

Don't forget what you were like  
 When you came into the world: God's enemies.

Paul writes, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10).

You entered the world hating Him.

Again Paul writes, “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh *is hostile toward God*; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:6-8).

Notice Paul doesn't say you *would not* submit to God,

He says you *could not* submit to Him.

That's why Jesus will tell us in John 6, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (v. 44).

Literally, He says, "No one is able to come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me drags/compels him."

We wouldn't come, because we hated Him.

The Lord didn't drag us into the kingdom against our wills –

But He changed our hearts so that we would want to enter His kingdom

Through the New Birth.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).

The Spirit made us alive, so that we could enter it.

Jesus said to His disciples, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (6:63).

The Spirit of love shed the love of Christ abroad in our hearts

So that we would desire it and want to enter.

Paul writes, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6),

And in verses 22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

"We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

C. Finally, God not only loved you first in eternity,



And He not only loved you first in time,  
Meditating on His love is the best way  
To stir up your love for Him.

Think about how He didn't have to love you,  
But chose to do so anyway.

How He singled you out  
From all the others,  
To set His affection on you –  
How when He thought about you in eternity,  
He said, "You will be Mine."

How you didn't have to do anything  
To make Him love you –  
He did it all,  
He sent His Son to live for you  
And to die for you,  
To give His Spirit to you,  
That He might put you in Christ,  
That you might actually be lovely in Him.

How He was willing to pay  
Such a great price to have you:  
The life of His only Son.

That He did this while you were still His enemy,  
When you still hated Him.

How He changed your heart,  
Purely by His sovereign good pleasure,  
By giving you His Spirit.

How could you not love someone  
Who has loved you so much?  
“We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

And so getting back to our original question,  
Why do some seek Jesus as He calls them to,  
While others seek Him for the things of this world,  
Or don’t seek Him at all?  
Why did you seek Him for His life?  
Why do you continue to seek Him for His grace?  
It’s because He first loved you,  
And for that, you owe Him  
Absolutely everything you are  
Or ever will be.

But what if you don’t love Him –  
Does that mean He hasn’t loved you?  
There is a sense in which God loves everyone.

Remember, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

His love was so great

He sent His Son into the world

To give all who hear His Gospel

The opportunity to repent and believe.

But what about this eternal, infinite,

And unchanging love we’ve been talking about?

If you don’t love Him now,

Does that mean God doesn’t have this for you?

Not necessarily.

If you die without trusting Jesus, then no –

He didn’t love you in this way.

But since you haven’t,

The possibility still exists that He does.

How can you find out?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,

And turn from your sins.

If you do, you will know that He has –

It’s the only way you can know.

May He grant you the grace to do so. Amen.