

4. Life is Good Because
We Love Another
1 John 4:7-21

As we celebrate the gift of eternal life during this Easter Season, our theme is "Life is Good." We are looking at 1 John to see why life is good. Bonnie talked to us about life being good because God is light. In our God there is no darkness. Our Creator is completely and totally good. God created us for good. Then I talked to you about life being good because we are children of God. Why did God have us? God had us for one reason: to share with us the joy of life, which God has enjoyed throughout eternity. Last week Bonnie talked about how life is good because through Christ God abides in us and we abide in God. Life becomes good when we enter into fellowship with God.

This morning John tells us that life is good because we love one another. The goodness of life is in joyful relationships. God enjoys us, and we enjoy God. And we enjoy each other as well. Life is good because we love one another and enjoy one another.

We are celebrating mothers today. Mothers understand that life is good when you love. They also understand that the goodness of life does not mean an easy, carefree life. Love makes great demands on us. Yet, in spite of the sacrifices and frustrations that love requires, it is love that makes life good.

We celebrate mothers because most mothers love their children unconditionally. Our mothers don't love us because of our accomplishments or our extraordinary gifts. They love their children because they are their children.

So does God. We don't earn God's love. We don't deserve God's love. God's love is given to us as a gracious gift. God loves us, not because of who we are or what we have done, but because we are God's children.

Now, that doesn't mean God approves of everything we do. A few weeks ago, I wrote in my column in the Source, *Rules for Living*, that we must be careful not to confuse unconditional love and unconditional approval. They are too different things. God does not approve everything we say and do. When we say something or do something which hurts God's children, God doesn't like it. God may even get angry with us. But God doesn't stop loving us.

Wise parents do not give their children unconditional approval. A loving mother can say to her child, "I love you, but you can do better than that." Loving parents can say to their children, "What you have done is wrong. It is bad. Don't do that anymore." In fact loving parents will say that to their children, because they know that if they doesn't correct their children's behavior, their children will have a tough life if they don't learn right from wrong and good from bad. The goal of parenting is to teach our children how to take their place in society and live responsible, loving lives, because the key to enjoying the goodness of life is learning how to form loving relationships. The best thing a mother can do for her children is to teach them how to love.

That's the way God is. God is a Mother who loves us unconditionally, although God doesn't give us unconditional approval.

And God expects us to love each other unconditionally, even those who do and say things that we don't approve of. We don't approve of everything people say and do. But we don't stop

loving them. They may say or do things which hurt us, or, even worse, hurt people we care about. We may even get angry with people. But you don't stop loving them.

Love demands that we want the best for people, that we are willing to do whatever we can to help them become better, stronger, wiser and happier people. We will not stop wanting the best for people and working for their good, even if they are not doing the same for us. God loves us unconditionally, and we do the same for one another. The closer to God you are, the more you see the world through God's eyes. As we abide in a close fellowship with God, we see the people around us through God's eyes. We share the love God feels for all of God's children. We love God's children, not because they deserve to be loved or have earned our love. We love God's children because they are God's children.

When we don't love people, it's time for us to take a closer look at our relationship with God. When we stop loving people, it is always because we are not looking at them through God's eyes. When you can't love someone, you need to draw closer to God.

What a wonderful thing it is when we do love one another.

Here in Chapelwood, we have about one thousand members. That gives us a thousand times as many possibilities to enjoy life's blessings than we would have if we were alone.

Week before last, I talked about the joy that parents feel when they see their children enjoying life. Becky and I were married seven years before our first child came along. To tell you the truth, we had pretty much given up on the idea of having children. We just didn't think it would happen. But that was all right. Because the churches I served had children. We loved them like they were our own children. We still love the children in the church.

But, then, everyone in the church loves the children of the church. When a new baby is born into the church, we all rejoice. When we baptize them, we make a commitment to love them in God's name. As we watch infants become toddlers, we rejoice in them. As we watch toddlers become children we rejoice in their accomplishments. As we watch them become scholars and athletes and musicians, we rejoice in them. As they graduate and go on to school or into the job market, we rejoice in them. As we watch our members marry, start their own families, and become successful in their careers, we rejoice with them. We rejoice with those members who become grandparents. We rejoice when they retire, although it's always sad when they retire and move away.

We rejoice with our members as they grew more mature and we see them producing the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. For those who have learned to enjoy the goodness of life, there is never an end to the new blessings God has in store for us. Every stage of life has new blessings, including the Golden Years.

We rejoice with our members as they enter into eternal life.

Because we love one another, we share the joys of a thousand lives.

Now, let's be honest and say that enjoying the blessings of a thousand people also means sharing the sorrows. As Paul said, "Rejoice with those who rejoice. Mourn with those who mourn." If we are a thousand times happier from sharing each others' joys, you would think we would be a thousand times sadder from sharing one another struggles and trials as well. But that isn't the way it works out.

Someone has said that when we share one another's joys, they are multiplied, and when we share one another's sorrows, they are divided. In other words, it's one thousand times easier to experience grief and sorrow, because you know that one thousand other people are helping you bear the load by sharing it with you.

In fact, there is a real joy in bearing one another's burdens. The joy is this: when we love another enough to share each other's hard times, we have the joy of seeing them get through those hard times and come out on top. What a joy it is to see people you love stand tall and strong in times of struggle and eventually win the victory.

If you don't remember anything else I have ever say to you, please remember this: The secret to enjoying the goodness of life is to love one another. Those who love, and only those who love, can know the true goodness of life. Love one another, and enjoy the goodness of life together.

Dr. Wesley Welborn
Senior Pastor