**Lessons from a Lockdown**

**Volume II**

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**Day 77**

**1 John 4:19-21**

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. What motivates me to love people? Am I motivated by people’s love for me than God’s love for me? Why?
2. How do I show my love for God? How can I do the same to my brothers and sisters?
3. Why am I tempted to hate my brothers or sisters? Is there a good excuse to hate? Why?
4. Why should it be easier to love people compared to loving God?
5. Why is loving God and loving my brothers and sisters connected?

***Insight:***

We love because God first loved us. We love God as a response to his love. But sometimes we do what we do as Christians not out of love for God. Sometimes we can fall into *legalism* – we do the right things but not with the right heart. Instead of having a relationship with God we practice rituals. Sometimes, we do our acts of Christian service with the wrong motivations. Sometimes we do good as a way of manipulating God (as if that were even possible) into granting what we want. Sometimes we serve in the church not because we love God but so that we could be praised or to prove we are better than other Christians or to feel good about ourselves. That is why we need to always check our hearts. Why are we doing what we are doing? Why are we leading or serving? Why are we submissive? Why are we discipling and allowing ourselves to get discipled? Why are we attending church? Why are we committed to every meeting of the body? Why are we reaching out to the lost? Why do we give contribution and benevolence? Why do I pray? Why do I read the Bible? Why do I fast? Am I doing all these things out of love for God?

If we are struggling with our love for God perhaps the solution is to remember how he first loved us. It is not about making ourselves feel guilty, but once again feeling God’s love. There was a time we found God’s love for us. We find this again by studying the Scriptures, seeking God in prayer, and remembering all those times God has been faithful to us. God’s love for us is constant, it does not change. All we have to do is remember this truth.

Our response to God loving is, is loving our brothers and sisters. We love them not because they deserve it. Love should not depend on the worthiness of the recipient, otherwise it is not love but a transaction. We love them not because we feel like it. Love should not be motivated by our comfort or convenience. We love our brothers and sisters because God first loved us. That’s it. So whenever we don’t love our brothers and sisters, for whatever reason we might have, we are being ungrateful to God’s love for us. There is no way we can excuse ourselves from loving our brothers and sisters, because it should be a result of our love for God.

If we cannot love our fellow human being how can we love God who is not human like us? It should be easier to love people we can relate to. Isn’t it true that the more people are similar to us the easier it is for us to love them? Certainly, our brothers and sisters are more like us, than we are like God. We can empathize with them. We might have the same strengths and weaknesses as they do. We can imagine what it feels like to be in their shoes. We can understand their difficulties and their struggles. We can relate with their hopes and their dreams. So it should be easier for us to love people like us than to love God. But why is that not the case sometimes?

Perhaps another reason why Jesus became human is so that it would be easier to love God more. In the gospels we read about Jesus as a human being and simply as the Son of God. We read about his human feelings, actions and words. Jesus wept, got tired, slept, got hungry and thirsty, displayed joy and sadness, suffered emotionally and physically. By becoming human, Jesus helps us to relate to God more. We can imagine God’s heart by looking at Jesus. By loving Jesus the person, we love God.

What we do to show our love to Jesus as person, should also be the things we do to show our love for our brothers and sisters. If we are careful not to do anything that would hurt Jesus’ feelings, we should also be careful not to do anything that would needlessly hurt the feelings of our brothers and sisters. As we strive to get to know Jesus so that we can love him better, let us strive to know our brothers and sisters more so that we can love them more.

Let us always respond to God’s love by loving our brothers and sisters.