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We are half way to Pentecost and today is the final in our three part series titled, ***"This is Love"***, an exploration of **"LOVE"** many of us have heard in the context of the Cross and Easter, but rarely probe further, *What kind of love is this? What makes it different? Why should I want to understand it? Will it change my life? How?* We have confused **love** with **lust** and that's where lies, the confusion: we cannot find solutions to the problems of the world, because we apply the wrong kind of love, often with the wrong motive.

One of my favourite authors, Ravi Zacharias helps us understand that in Greek, **LOVE** has four expressions/words: **agape** (God's love), **philia** (friendship love), **storge** (parental love), and **eros** (romantic love). He explains, only in marriage, do these four come together.

Hebrew is a foundational language in the ancient world. Hebrew developed at a time when pictorial languages like Cuneiform in Sumeria, and Hieroglyphics in Egypt were replaced by alphabets. Hebrew gives great insight into the meaning of words. The interpretation of Scripture by Rabbis is a study in the relationships between root words. The Hebrew for the word "love" (**ahava**); the root word for "love" means **"to give"**.

The Gospel writer John, aa Hebrew himself, wrote to communicate in Greek which was the main global language of the day. John used expressions which the Hebrew mind would read understand, but needed explanation for the Greek mind to appreciate.

When we understand this, we will appreciate ***"God so LOVED the world, He GAVE His only Son..."*** followed by the promise, ***"whoever believes I sent My Son to buy the price of your life through His death, that person will enjoy eternal life in My home!"***

Knowing this, that the word **Love** is rooted in the verb **to give**, this three part series begins to make sense as a life-changing journey to discover the heart of God's love!

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First we heard, **"Love that Forgives Our Sin"** - out of His love for us, God gives forgiveness without condition, but to receive this gift from God, requires our repentance. This is the first step in relationship building, to be forgiven for anything in our past, and not let our past be dangled before us as a reminder of our wrong. We might find it possible to forgive, and find it more difficult to forget, but **ONLY** God can forgive **and** forget. *"He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, nor pay us back in full for our wrongs. As high as heaven is over the earth, so strong is his love to those who fear him. And as far as sunrise is from sunset, He has separated us from our sins."*¹

Then we heard, **"Love that Conquers Death"** - out of His love for us, God breaks the barrier of death to give us **new life, to be resurrected to new life with Him.**

Today, we shall explore **God's love that makes ALL things new.**

Knowing the mess we got ourselves into by an act of disobedience, God is not trying to **"mend things"** for us (as in darning socks to last a bit longer, or sewing on new buttons to make a coat last longer) God is **MAKING** all things new.

Once again, we reach into Paul's writings to the Church in Corinth. Let's pick up where he left us on the significance of the resurrection: ***"death came into the world through a man (Adam), now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man (Christ). Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back."***²

¹ Psalm 103:12-18 (The Message)

² 1 Corinthians 15:21-23

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Almost 50 years after Paul wrote those words to the Church at Corinth, an Angel from God reveals to John what he heard God say to Jesus (*introduction to Revelation*): "I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from His presence, but they found no place to hide.³ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. The sea was also gone. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "**Look, I am making everything new!**"⁴

It begs the question, *How great and wonderful is God's love, that when we messed up and brought brokenness into God's world, He commits Himself to let bygones-be-bygones, let the past be forgotten, and promises to make **ALL** things new?*

Putting aside images we cannot relate with because the human mind is cluttered with existential issues to comprehend it, the message of the entire Bible, and the focal message of the New Testament is summarised in these two messages, first from Paul to the Church at Corinth, that death was defeated by the resurrection of the Christ and anyone who believes this will given new life, and the second from John, that God is **making ALL things new**, to return and live among His people.

Churches across the world during Paul and John's time, were no different to the Churches today: they faced a hostility, as we do, from

a) those who did not understand them,

³ Revelation 20:11

⁴ Revelation 21:1-5

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- b) those who did not **want to** understand them,
- c) those who thought they understood what they believe in, but decided it was not for them, and
- d) those who thought that believers in Christ were subversive, upsetting the normative and were promising things that could not be delivered.

Before we close this morning, lets set the record straight:

Having examined the love that forgives our sin, the love that conquered death, and the love that makes all things new, God is inviting us to place our hope in Him, that He is true to His word, that when He makes all things new, we too will be made new, fit-for-purpose in the "New Jerusalem" he has prepared for us when this earth and this sky will be no more.

In order to be absolutely clear that, our hope is in the promise of God, we need also to be absolutely clear, not pin our hopes on three things.

First, **Do NOT pin your Hope on Compensation.** We should not think that God will make it up to us because we have suffered so much in this broken world, He owes us. God owes us nothing. He made a perfect world for us all to enjoy, but the first humans messed it up by trading a truth for a lie, and we still do it, trading genuine and authentic with synthetic and artificial.

Many years ago, when CocaCola introduced Fanta, the marketing campaign invited children on their way to school to bring an orange and trade it in for a can of Fanta! Imagine, bring a fresh fruit and we will give you a can of carbonated, synthetic flavoured, orange drink!

This is what the first humans did - they traded the real thing for a fake promise - made in the image of God, and invited to become **like** God!

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God's love is making **ALL** things new. As that happens, God will clothe us with new bodies which cannot ever die.

Second, **Do NOT pin your hope on Explanation** - We should not think, when we get to heaven, God will explain everything. Let's not pin our hopes on this, that God will pamper our curiosity. If God does not owe me anything, He certainly does not owe me an explanation for things I failed to understand or appreciate. Let's ground our hope on the fact that when the new earth and the new Heaven are merged into one, each of us will be made new. Even though, today I have questions for Him, in His presence, I will be so satisfied that I will not need an explanation for anything.

Finally, **Do NOT pin your hope on Evacuation** - that God will come to get us out, to rescue us from this miserable existence, riddled with sickness, disease and all manner of social ills, that Jesus the rescuer will come and take us out of here, the same way a child being bullied in the play ground is hoping for Daddy, Mummy or Teacher to rescue them from the misery of being bullied.

John makes it perfectly clear: God is returning with a New Jerusalem, a new heaven and new earth which will be His dwelling place. It is God desire to live among his people: ***the old order is passed away... He who is seated on the throne, is making all things new.***

Our hope is not about getting out of here, it's about becoming new, here, now, today, to worship God who is returning to make this His home, and to share the news that we will be a part of God's eternal home with Him - we will be His "roomies"!

The love of God ***gives*** forgiveness, ***gives*** new life, ***gives*** all things new.

Where do we go from here? What do we do with this sacrificial love, which through sacrifice, is so ***giving***

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In the 1986 Hollywood film "Crocodile Dundee" Australian Mike Dundee visits New York City for the first time.

He is out with a female newspaper reporter and is cornered by a gang of young thugs who demand his wallet. Mike Dundee does not oblige, so one of the gang pulls out a switchblade and threatens Dundee who declares, "that's not a knife," and pulls out a large Bowie-type knife, saying, **"THIS IS A KNIFE!"**

Reminiscing this scene, I wondered whether Mike Dundee's response, should frame our own response to anyone who tries to show us, or tell us of a distorted kind of love - that we would have the utter boldness to say, **"what you have (or talking about) is not love, THIS IS LOVE - that a man died for His friends!"**

We can hear Apostle Paul saying to the Church at Corinth, "That's not love...**THIS IS LOVE!** Let me describe it to you..." (Love is patient, kind, not jealous, nor proud or boastful or rude and does not demand its own way).

The death of Jesus on the cross, and the Resurrection of Christ, is the "difference-maker"; it changed everything. God's love saw Jesus' death on the cross and his love saw the resurrection of Christ from the tomb, in the process, our sins were forgiven, death was defeated, and He is making (*present continuous verb!*) **ALL** things new for the day when God returns with a new creation: the new Jerusalem, and Jesus is enthroned as King!

Will we learn to be bold enough to tell the world around us, ***This is love: that the Son of God gave His life, that we might live in eternity! Can anyone beat that? AMEN.***