



THE FACES OF GOD
Senior Pastor, Scott McAlister
Sunday, March 7, 2010



SONG—“Your Love Is A Song”

Intro: I think that I see the world different from a lot of people, or at least a lot of ministers...you know religious professionals. A lot of folk see the world as more evil than ever before. And I have to admit the world is filled with a lot of evil. Senseless, crazy crime does seem to be on the increase.

Did you guys see the news this week about the 17 year girl in California who was raped and murdered? The man accused of the murder could also be responsible for disappearance of another teenage girl from February 2009. And to top it all off the same man was also charged with a separate assault with attempt to commit rape on another female jogger in December. I have to admit we do live in a crazy world.

But I would also say that there are people out there who have their eyes and their minds wide open and they are searching for love. I believe that they are truly looking to see the face of God because God is love. Check out this passage out of **1 John 4:7-12, “Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is brought to full expression in us.”

I'm just saying that we have the opportunity to show people the face of God...the love of God through what they see in us.

I walked into my youngest daughter's bedroom this week and there in her bed was Mr. Bear. **(Hold Mr. Bear up for everyone to see)** Mr. Bear is really old. She got him on her very first Christmas as a gift from her aunt Teresa, and next month Katie will be 18. I'm not sure how old that is in stuffed Bear years, but it is old!

Mr. Bear is not worth very much. Truth is we probably couldn't give him away. His eyes fell off years ago and we have sewed him up on more than one occasion.

But, for some reason Katie loves Mr. Bear. She has loved him too much for Mr. Bear's own good. When Katie ate Mr. Bear was right beside her. When we went on trips Mr. Bear traveled with us. And still to this very day when Katie goes to bed at night Mr. Bear is right there next to her.

Katie obviously does not love Mr. Bear because Mr. Bear is beautiful. She loves him with the kind of love that makes Mr. Bear beautiful.

You see there is one kind of love that is drawn to an object because it is expensive or attractive or it lends status to the one associated with it. You know what I mean, like I love my new Mercedes because it gives me clout and prestige. It's like you love to be friends with powerful people because knowing them makes you powerful. I'm just saying there is a kind of love that seeks value.

AND then there is a kind of love that creates value. There is a kind of love that seeks value in what is loved, and there is a kind of love that creates value in old ragged stuff bears.

One translation renders **1 John 4:7 "Beloved,"** John is talking about God's beloved, God's rag dolls. **"Let us love one another because love is from God."** He is its source.

If you want to know what the true nature of love is then you must begin by considering what love means in the case of God. **"Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God,"** he says. **"Whoever does not love does not know God,**

for God is love.” John makes three great **“God is”** statements in his writing; he says, **“God is spirit”**, he says, **“God is light”**, and he says, **“God is love”**. I think that maybe the third **“God is”** statement that John makes is the supreme statement. Bottom line is people matter to God. People count. Only people count. All people count no matter how ragged they are. God is love and our job is to show people the love of God through how we live out our lives.

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Thousands of people were left homeless and destitute. Many were displaced all over the US. One man named Thomas Benjamin was one of several thousand brought to here to Greenville. And God orchestrated a union of several families and Thomas...God did it to display a kind of love that creates value...He did it so the people that He loved could see His face!

VIDEO

Would you help me welcome Lyle and April Jones and their two sons Zac and Trey! April you said in the video that you *“would encourage anyone who wants to truly feel what it’s like to be as close to Jesus as you can be to open your eyes to what is around you because God answers prayers and He places people in your life that you have no clue that He put there and sometimes it’s that person that brings out the best in you and teaches you what it’s like to have a true heart for God.”*

Well I want you to know that through your loving hearts you allowed others to see the face of God as well. I want to read you an e mail I received several weeks ago.

Hello Pastor McAlister,

My name is Michael Lee, I am a chaplain at Open Arms Hospice here in Simpsonville. One of your parishioners was a patient of ours and during his stay, I met a family that “adopted” him as their own.

Seeing what I saw has blown me away. The way these families from your church took responsibility for this man and they mutually “shared and did” life with him.

Economically, culturally and racially they were different from this man, but it seemed the reality of the Gospel was bigger than that to all of them.

So many times I see the failure of religion around here with families that are “religious,” but do not live out or have the power of the gospel especially in the bad times.

I was so very impressed by these families, who are all members of your church, and how they came around and loved this person who recently passed away.

I imagine you are very busy, but I would like to speak to you over coffee one day and learn how you do and develop small groups and teachings. I also believe you are the founding pastor of this church and that is also why I would like to meet you. I am trying my best to develop a Gospel-centered church up in Hendersonville where I live.

I just believe I saw the reality of the Gospel lived out with the families I met last week from your church. I want to learn how that all happened. Yes, it’s the Spirit’s doing, but I believe smart ministry, is very important as well.

**Thank you and blessings to you and your community.
Michael Lee, chaplain**

I so wish I could take I could take at least a little responsibility for you guys but I can’t...it’s all God. God at work in you to show a world what the gospel looks like fleshed out in everyday life. Thank you guys so much for allowing us to share this beautiful story.

You will never have a better opportunity to experience something beautiful...to see His face than when you are serving God through others. April and Lyle Jones and John and Tracie Meeks saw something beautiful in a man named Thomas. Thomas

saw something beautiful in them! In the end what's they are experienced was the presence of God which is the most beautiful thing of all.

SONG—"Something Beautiful"

Are you ready for something beautiful to touch you? If you would like to be loved by another kind of love...the kind of love that creates value. If you are ready to accept the love that God has for you...if you are ready to become a follower of Jesus then pray this prayer with me right now there in your seats.

SALVATION PRAYER

VIDEO

Remind people who have not filled out a card to do so. Also remind everyone to continue to pray for those names on our boards and reach out to those folk this week and allow them to see something beautiful in you!