

**“LOVE WITH NO LIMITS”**  
*Ephesians 3:14-21*

Ann is being baptised here this morning into a way of life which has love at its very heart. Whatever else we might want to say about Jesus, about God, about being a Christian, love is the very basis of it all. We read in one of the letters that St John wrote, that “*God is love*” and in the short passage we’ve just read from St Paul’s letter to the new Christians in the Asian town of Ephesus, he tells us that’s something that we should never lose sight of.

What we’ve just heard is Paul’s enthusiastic prayer for the new converts in the bustling seaport that was Ephesus, a prayer that they will be “*rooted and established*” in love. Those two words – one from botany and one from construction – point to the followers of Jesus having their roots pushed down deep into God’s love and then, changing the metaphor, building their lives on that foundation of love. It is a love that is, quite literally, both radical and fundamental.

This is the love of God the Father – his amazing grace, if you like – that was demonstrated by his Son Jesus as he gave up everything for us in his death on the cross, and that is made real in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we’ve already said, being a follower of Jesus – a Christian – is all about acknowledging that love, and then sharing it with all those we come into contact with. We don’t have long this morning, but I’d just like us to think of four aspects of that love which Paul outlines in these verses.

**1. A LOVE WITHOUT LIMITS**

Whenever Paul is writing about God’s love to us, he gets quite carried away. You can sense his enthusiasm, even through the written word, even through the translation. He talks about this love being high and wide and long and deep. He is, of course, not trying to quantify it, to tell us its exact dimensions, but telling us that this love of God is **wide enough** to reach the whole world – no-one should feel out of its orbit and influence. It is a love that is **long enough** to stretch from eternity to eternity – we read in the Bible that God has loved us since before the world began and he will go on loving us into the eternal future: there is no beginning and no end to this love. It is a love which is **high enough** to raise us all to heaven, the shorthand we use for taking us into God’s very presence – it’s never going to run out so that we miss out on the amazing promises of God’s eternal peace and prosperity. And, what is most amazing, this love is **deep enough** to reach down into any situation in which we might find ourselves – if we are in the depths of depression, if we feel we have hit rock bottom in terms of our life, if we are in the very worst situation of degradation or depravity, God reaches down.

Indeed, that’s what Jesus demonstrated in his coming into our world. He left the very heights of heaven where he had all that he could possibly want, where he was at God the Father’s right hand, where he was served and supported by hosts of angelic beings, and plunged himself into the dirt and dysfunction of this world – a world which God had made perfect, but which had become distorted and diseased by the presence of evil. That’s the extent of God’s love and the astonishing way in which Jesus gave flesh to it.

**2. A LOVE BEYOND UNDERSTANDING**

Paul calls this love a “*love that surpasses knowledge*”. It’s difficult – impossible, really – to understand. Why would God do this? How has that love come about? What’s it all about? We can’t really analyse it: that’s the thing about love. Richard Dawkins, mechanistic scientist that he is, is often confronted with the question “How do you explain love?” I think he can see some kind of evolutionary advantage in it, but I’m not sure even he has been able successfully to explain love. And God’s love is even more incomprehensible than our human love. It is extravagant and prodigal, beyond anything we can conceive of. And there’s certainly no evolutionary advantage to it as far as God’s concerned!

I imagine many of us here – if not all of us – have at some time fallen in love or, at least, had a fairly hefty crush on someone. Can you remember what that felt like? God’s love is even greater than that. It’s beyond our imagining, beyond our understanding. And what’s more, it’s directed at you. You are the target of God’s love. You matter to him – however far you may feel you are from him, however deep the difficulty you may feel you’re in, God reaches out to you with love.

### **3. A LOVE THAT CAN BE EXPERIENCED**

But although you might not be able to understand it, that doesn’t mean you can’t experience it. Some of you will have heard me use this example before, so apologies to you. I’m no good at all at science and all that kind of stuff. I could never get my head round it at school and in the past half century it’s all got more complicated and difficult anyway. So, for example, I have no idea what electricity is or how it works. When I was quite young, though, I stuck my fingers in an empty lamp socket that was still switched on and got quite a jolt. My lack of understanding of electricity didn’t prevent me from experiencing its effect fairly dramatically.

Just because God’s love is beyond your understanding, it doesn’t mean you can’t experience its effect. I’ve no idea what makes my wife love me, but she does, so I enjoy it. There are many people who aren’t prepared to commit themselves to God until they understand it all – you may be one of them. I can tell you pretty confidently that you never will understand it. But that doesn’t mean you can’t accept it and receive it. And when you do, it can give you quite a jolt – indeed, it will transform your life.

### **4. A LOVE WHICH FILLS US WITH GOD-NESS**

That’s what Paul means by that little bit in there about being “*filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*” As we acknowledge and experience that amazing, astounding, astonishing love of God; as we start to realise just how extravagant it is; as we allow God’s love to reach into our situation and flow through us, it begins to change us. In some people that change is quite dramatic. In others it’s more of a slow burn. But change us it will.

God loves you just as you are this morning. Whatever you’ve done, whatever your response to him until now, however great your apparent indifference or opposition to him – he still loves you. But once you get round to welcoming that love, to acknowledging God’s grace, to resigning yourself (as it were) to being loved unconditionally by him, then God starts to transform you into something even better. And that process of transformation keeps going and going. So if you’re sitting there this morning thinking that this is all for those who aren’t yet followers of Jesus, think again. God keeps on loving you and wants to keep on transforming you so that you become more and more like the Jesus Christ you claim to be following.

As we are filled with God’s love, we are filled with is “God-ness”, because God is love. And that means we can begin to live lives that are as full of satisfaction and purpose as God intended. It’s that “*abundant life*” that Jesus spoke about, that “*living life to the full*”.

Ann is witnessing here this morning to the fact that God loves her and that she knows it. She is saying by this baptism that she wants to go on growing in that love, she wants to allow God to keep on transforming her, using her, filling her with his “God-ness”. It would be great to think that there might be some here this morning who would like to take the first step on that journey – or some who want to re-start a journey that they once began and have given up on. God loves you. You matter to God. Do something in response to that!