

Being a Fan of God!  
Sermon for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
Sermon Text: 1 John 4:13-21



*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. <sup>17</sup> By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so also are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. <sup>19</sup> We love because He first loved us. <sup>20</sup> If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>*

*And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

Are you a true Frankfurt fan and have things from Eintracht Frankfurt (Frankfurt Soccer team) hanging all over your room or are you more of a Southern fan and root more for the FC Bayern team? Or maybe you're one of those people who say: "I support my home team and that's why I'm naturally a 'Red Bull' Fan." Are you a fan of a soccer team? Or does your heart beat faster when your favorite musician comes to town? When you are a true fan, it shows not only in the posters in your room but in your overall behavior. As a true fan, you read everything that's written about your favorite group, you tweet, you search for groups on Facebook or YouTube that provide you with up-to-date information, and you never want to miss any news about your favorite soccer team or music group. Even if not all people are equally excited about soccer teams or music stars, we can well understand what it means to root for something and be a fan. I also want to be a fan! I want to be a fan of the greatest Composer and Artist of all time. Imagination and unlimited creativity are not only His profession, but He is also the epitome of wisdom, strength, and love – our great Creator, your God and mine. He brought forth the wonderful creation out of nothing. Through His act of creation, we live, love, and marvel every day anew. Over millennia, this great Composer and Artist has continued to inspire us, whether through the beauty of a flower or through the works of gifted composers that He inspired. I stand in amazement under the starry sky and admire Him as well as everything He has wonderfully established. Even in our small, private everyday lives, He is always present as Creator and Protector. Everything that I see, experience, hear, and taste, comes from His unending love. He spread out my own life before Him like a big canvas and designed it with wonderful imagination and sometimes even humor. How can it be that this Creator of the whole world is still so unknown? Why does He have so few fans? I can't find people who rave about Him on either Facebook or Twitter. People should actually go out into the streets in every country and in every language and praise His wonderful works. Why don't we do this? Instead, we glorify this or that popstar who is ultimately only a small part of the great Creator. We don't want to know the actual Composer, the Creator, the Origin of everything. We act like people who want to hear wonderful music but who don't want to know the Composer! Instead, we worship love as the greatest of all things and forget the Composer who created this love. Why don't we recognize the greatest of all artists and composers? The reason lies in our fear. John also writes in our text about fear. Fear separates us from God. We have such a great fear of losing the unimportant things in life that we are in danger of losing the greatest gift of all. Because with fear, we can't trust God or believe in Him. As people, we are aware of our imperfection from the start. We feel the separation from God. We know that we are not perfect. We are also aware that our individual sins separate us from Him. This awareness of our imperfection and sin drives us. We tend to be pathologically defensive and build high walls between ourselves and other people. And even between ourselves and God, we put up barriers. Fear leads us into the deepest darkness of night so that we can no longer see the wonderful light of the Creator. Fear paralyzes us: fear of losing our future, fear of losing our retirement, fear of losing our home, fear of being scorned by others... fear has many names, and it continuously blinds us. This makes all of life just scary. We can no longer see beautiful things because we are afraid. We can't believe because we are scared. We can't love because we are full of fear. As John says, "There is no fear in love." Let's imagine a mouse that is threatened by a snake. It is so scared that it cannot break eye contact between the snake and its own life. Even though freedom and life lie

before the mouse, fear holds it captive. Just as the snake holds the mouse captive with its gaze, Satan holds us captive with his gaze. Satan wants us to look at him more and to acknowledge him as the great creator. Against God's wonderful creation, His unending love and creativity, Satan deploys ice cold bloodshed, war, murder, and death. He also presents us with our own death and sins. Satan tries to make us trust more in these things than in the living God. In this way, we become bound to Satan and become his slaves. The more we fight against Satan, the clearer it becomes that we can only lose this game. Even when we try to conquer Satan with good deeds, we fail miserably. We are robbed of our future and in the end, we must die. John wants to free us from all these things and therefore speaks about God and His love.

At this point, we should really stop and think. Although John is talking about love that is naturally present among Christians, it's not primarily about the love that we express, but about the great Creator of love. Our love is always limited, always imperfect, always tied to self-love. For this reason, John wants to turn our attention away from our own love and turn to God. God loved us first. Commanding a person to love is about as pointless as commanding them not to sin. Such commands are always based on the fear that we have. For this reason, John directs us to our Creator and His love. It is only by His power that we can love. Fighting against Satan is useless, only God can help us against Satan. John really wants us to see this so that we can lose our fear and renounce Satan and his works with confidence as we refocus on God. That's why John speaks about the unending love of God. This love has sought us and found us at the lowest point of human history. On the day Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He defeated Satan.

Through the cross of Jesus Christ, we don't have to fear Satan any longer. We also don't have to be afraid of our own fear. We are free. In these verses, John really brings together what belongs together: Love and God. God is love and love is God. This love doesn't only remain in heaven, but it moves towards us. God's love finds expression in my own life. Not only can I become a fan of God, but I can also experience in my own life everything that makes Him a magnificent composer and artist. I can also be free from Satan's sight, free from fear, and free from all the things that fill my life with hopelessness and sadness. Because a whole new movement comes into my life with love. I move away from Satan and all his works and turn to God and His wonderful works.

I stop looking at the sight of evil in the world. I look to God and become filled with His love. I can feel everything that God is in my own life. God pierces me with His love and I participate in His love. Just as unconditionally as God loves us and creates new love out of nothing, I can now go to the people around me and continue to love even when I don't receive the same love back. At the time John wrote this letter, there were Christians who actually thought that God's love belonged to people as if it were our possession. These people haughtily claimed that love was some kind of secret language or achievement that would elevate them above all others. Yet this kind of love is only self-love. God's love, in contrast, never remains alone but always seeks out others. Even today, God lays so many people at our doorstep who need His love. The invisible God can be displaced but not the poor Lazarus who lies at the door of the house (Luke 16:19-31) or the one who has fallen among robbers (Luke 10:25-37). Those who pick on others are ever-present! As well as those whom we see as offenders are among us. These people need our prayers. We should pray for them. John doesn't tell us all this as if love were to be taken into account alongside all our activities. No, love for our neighbor is essential to Christians and whoever does not love does not abide in God. How serious this is meant, can be understood from Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: whoever hates his brother is a murderer (Matt. 5:21-22 & 1 John 3:15). There is so much to love, so much to forgive, so much need. Yet God doesn't want to place anything impossible as a burden on our shoulders because it is God who created love, not we who came up with love. He also placed many people next to me who are also sent into the world with me. We are not all the same. That is God's intention. He wants each of us to go into the world with our gifts and peculiarities. As the body of Christ, we are on the move. And indeed, I see that there are many who are on this path of love. Every Sunday, this group of fans meets at St. Lukas Church. Some are reaching out to us through digital platforms. Some are still at the beginning of this path. Still others are a few more days ahead on the path... God continues writing on his drawing board and we are amazed! Amen.