

2015

Easter 5 • 1 John 4:1–11 (12–21) • May 3, 2015

Mark Rockenbach

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, rockenbachm@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj>

 Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rockenbach, Mark (2015) "Easter 5 • 1 John 4:1–11 (12–21) • May 3, 2015," *Concordia Journal*: Vol. 41: No. 1, Article 19.
Available at: <http://scholar.csl.edu/cj/vol41/iss1/19>

This Homiletical Help is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Journal by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Easter 5 • 1 John 4:1–11 (12–21) • May 3, 2015

We have done no act of love, at any time, in any way to God (Is 53:6, Rom 3:10-12, 1 Jn 4:10). The love between us and God began with God and not with us.

For the narcissist this might be difficult to accept. But consider what it means to be narcissistic: 1) grandiose sense of self-importance 2) fantasies of success, power, brilliance, beauty, or love 3) believes they are so special and unique that no one else can fully understand 4) enjoys excessive admiration 5) a sense of entitlement 6) little empathy 7) takes advantage of others to promote their own desires 8) envious of others and believes others are envious of them 9) arrogant behavior and attitude. These are the diagnostic criteria according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). But consider 2 Timothy 3:1–5, “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.”

The world of psychology and the world of theology acknowledge that people are lovers of themselves. So it is true that we have done no act of love, at any time, in any way to God. We are too busy loving ourselves in ways described by the DSM or 2 Timothy 3. Therefore, God reached out through Jesus Christ and showed to us self-centered, narcissistic, self-loving people a love that is beyond our worldly understanding.

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 Jn 4:9–11).

The love between us and God began with God. In Genesis, self-loving Adam and Eve are hiding. They are not reaching out to God, they are not showing love to God. It is God who reaches out to them and calls to them, “Where are you?” And it is God that promises to love them in a way very different from the world. God would send Jesus to atone for sin (1 Jn 10), not only the sin of Adam and Eve but the sin of the whole world.

Therefore, 1 John 4:11 encourages, “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” We love our neighbor by doing things that are of the first article of the creed. This might include mowing the neighbor’s grass, checking in on an elderly person, and offering a ride to someone. But even non-Christians love their neighbor in these ways. What is profoundly lacking is showing the love of the second article of the creed. If God showed his love to us by forgiving our sins we can show that same love to our neighbor. When your neighbor speaks poorly of you, steals from you, are you willing to show God’s love by forgiving them in the name of Christ? When you sin against your neighbor are you willing to confess to them and seek forgiveness in the name of Christ?

We show the love of God to our neighbor when we confess sin and speak words of forgiveness that began not with us, but with Jesus Christ who atoned for the sin of the world.

Mark Rockenbach