

God is love.

These three words from our second reading
were penned by the Apostle John
toward the end of his life
when he was elderly, in his late 80s.

Jesus had been gone for years-
and John was the last Apostle left standing.
All the others-
dead and gone.

At the far end of his life
when he had distilled all his thoughts
his experiences and his theology
it came down to these three words,
God is love.

To understand them let's go back at least
60 years to the fateful night before Jesus died.

At that Passover table in the Upper Room
where Jesus gathered with his friends that night,
this same John, then the youngest disciple,
probably a teenager,
was right next to Jesus....
.....Right beside to Jesus
waaay inside his comfort zone.

It's how dinner parties
were done in the ancient Middle East.
It's still done that way in many parts of the world.
No high tables.
No straight back chairs
in perfect rows.
Instead, everyone reclined
at a single low table together.

The diners all reclined on cushions around it-
feet back- body forward.

And John was right there...in the place closest to Jesus,
reclining on Jesus' chest.

As John himself says in our second reading
"no one has ever seen God."

But mysteriously

there that night
young John dined with Jesus
leaned on Jesus
learned from Jesus,
looked up from about 18 inches away
as Jesus first broke the crusty bread
and raised the wine red cup.

And there God was WITH John.
John was with GOD.
John saw God.
and that God is love.

Sixty years later
John was still pondering that dinner party,
the night he reclined on Jesus chest.

That bread and that cup said to John
over and over "God is love."

Just think of all the thousands of times
John the Apostle sat at table,
took part in communion,
through decades,
....and decades later
he is still pondering what it all means.

We call this Table
and our eating and drinking together here
by a variety of names...

Holy Communion.....
Eucharist
the Sacrament of the Altar.....
the Lord's Supper.

But you know what it was first called
by those first followers of Jesus' Way?

It was called the Agape,
the Love Feast.

Every week
Every Sunday,
every day,
every moment,
we are reminded,
God is love.

Every time
We experience love
Anywhere
Any time
From anyone
In any way
We are celebrating Holy Communion.

Where we parents care for our children
God is love.

Where two lovers encounter each other
God is love.

Wherever we feed the hungry
Shelter the homeless
Visit the lonely
God is love.

This Sunday Table is the visual
touchable
smellable
tastable
version of John's three words:
God is love.

Here we gather
And seeking,
we find That something more,
Whose very name is Love.

That Sunday Table
Is set over and over and over again
During the week.

During our quiet time following the sermon ponder this:
whether you are coming here for the first time
or you've been at this table
since before most of us were born:

What do you feel at this table?
Do you know that God is with you?
Like Jesus
Like the Apostle John
Do you understand and experience that God is love?

Where else is that Table being set in your life today?

In the name of the One
who sets this Table,
In the name of one
whose Name is Love.
Amen.