

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.