Sermon:

**God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him**(1 Jn 4.9)

Last week we looked at the need for inspiration. But what is at the heart of inspiration? Love. Not just emotional, but a working of the will towards another (agape). A lack of this is where some relationships go wrong.

*Research has deduced 2 factors that predict whether the flame will stay alight forever.*

*Those who compliment their partners, and seek constructive ways to overcome obstacles together, remained tight. These couples are 'Masters of Love'. Those who criticise their partners and see only obstacles, on the other hand, became unstuck. These couples are the 'Disasters of Love'.*

*"There's a habit of mind that the Masters have," researcher John Gottman*[*has explained*](http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/06/happily-ever-after/372573/http:/www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/06/happily-ever-after/372573/)*, "which is this: they are scanning their social environment for things they can appreciate and say thank you for. They are building this culture of respect and appreciation very purposefully. Disasters are scanning the social environment for partners' mistakes."*

*What these contrasting traits reveal is whether or not we bring kindness and generosity or contempt and criticism to our relationship.*

All this applies to any relationship, including our relationship with God; when love is not at the centre things go sour.  
OK, but how do we get love at the centre?

How, in fact, do we learn anything? Through how we are brought up.

De-extinction of Mammoths: all very well to recreate mammoth DNA and through elephants recreate them, but how is a baby mammoth to know how to act as a mammoth? Not even the elephant knows this; it can only occur by exposure to source of mammoth-ness.

In the spiritual life how are we to know what άγάπε is? Thro exposure to the source of love - God. TEXT.

God wants us to have Life, not mere existence, but existence with agape. In some Romanian orphanages children grew up with little emotion, including love. They could end up being worse than animals.

TEXT. God did something, sent Jesus. Somehow this is key to receiving Life.  
Both sending Jesus and having life through Jesus together show God’s love.

Thus, love is greater than a mere attitude, it results in actions (sending JC), *and* actions results (bringing life).   
The parish provides ‘Brown bag’ parcels to those in need. One recipient said: *"This is a heartfelt thank you to all of the people of the Methodist communities who have contributed in one way or another to the making and handing out of food parcels. The Woman's Refuge here in Invercargill brought me a parcel last week. I guess my story is pretty much the same as anyone else's who gets into tight spots and cannot provide for their children. Thank you for helping me to fulfil my responsibilities as a mum – and even providing treats for my boy. You have my deepest gratitude.”*

God is love, and God is seen in love.