God’s Extravagant Love

God’s Love is “Agape Love”

 It’s a selfless unconditional love. It is the highest of the four types of love in the Bible.

 (1) Eros: sensual/romantic love

 (2) Storge: family love

 (3) Philia: brotherly love

 (4) Agape; God’s kind of love

 This Greek word, agápē *(pronounced uh-GAH-pay)*, and variations of it are frequently found throughout the New Testament.

 Many people have never experienced true agape love, which is the God kind of love. A person who is not born again relies on human love to get through this life, and too often they are disappointed, discouraged or they may become pessimistic through broken relationships or from being abused by people they trust and loved the most.

 Agape love involves faithfulness, grace, mercy and unconditional love. It is distinguished from the other types of love by its lofty moral nature and strong character.

Our Old Testament Scripture provides a demonstration of God’s agape love;

**1 Kings 17:8-16**

 8 Then the Lord said to Elijah, 9 “Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you.”

 10 So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, “Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?”

 11 As she was going to get it, he called to her, “Bring me a bite of bread, too.”

 12 But she said, “I swear by the Lord your God that I don’t have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die.”

 13 But Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you’ve said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what’s left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son.

 14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!”

 15 So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days.

 16 There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

Background: Why Elijah had to “Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city

 of Sidon”

1. Who are the characters in the story?
2. How did God show Elijah agape love?
3. The widow of Zarephath showed Elijah unconditional love. How?
4. How did God show the widow agape love?

Agape love is beautifully described in **I Corinthian 13**

 1 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing.

 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing.

 4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud

 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

 8 Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!

 9 Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!

 10 But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

 11 When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.

 12 Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

 13 Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

1. How does the extravagant love of God unexpectedly show up in your life?
2. How has the extravagant love of God showed up in the lives of those you love?
3. How can our church more intentionally celebrate the ways God’s extravagant love is expressed in our community of faith?
4. How has God’s extravagant love brought hope to those in our lives overcoming challenges, brokenness and despair?