

Throughout Memorial Day weekend several motives will spur us to action. The quest for fun will motivate us to find entertainment. Love of family will move us to get together. Faith will bring us to church. Hunger will send us to a picnic. Self-interest will reward us with a nap. Frustration will cause us to cut off other drivers. Anger will make us yell at the kids. Lust will tempt us to misbehavior. Revenge will make us turn against our neighbor. All these motives could exist in the same weekend. Many of them in the same hour.

When John explained to the first Christians the motive that should inspire all their behavior, he turned to the example of God. The motive behind God's behavior is always the same. It is love. God loved us first and sent the Son for the forgiveness of sins. This is the great mystery of Easter: Jesus died and rose for our forgiveness, not because God was frustrated or angry, not because it would be fun, but because God loved us.

John argues that since God has behaved that way toward us, we should behave that way toward one another. The primary motive that should inspire all our actions is love. Whether we are preparing the picnic, working, driving, shopping, correcting the kids, suing our neighbor, or praying, the primary motive should be love.

We will feel anger and frustration. They are feelings, not sins of themselves. It's what we do with them that becomes sinful. If we act out our anger we expel love and we separate ourselves from God. But when we feel anger, God still calls us to behave out of that anger in ways that love.

Love distinguishes those who know God from those who do not. We can enjoy this weekend most if everything we do comes first from our desire to return the gift that God gave us, the gift of love.