

Advent – Love (1 John 4:7-21; John 3:16-17)

Read Advent Notes for Week 3: Love

Play: The First Noel

As we continue our Advent series, the focus for today's message is LOVE. For us, love is typically seen as something we fall in and out of. Or we view love as something that must be earned. Because of how humans normally love one another, we tend to chase after the emotional and effectual components associated with what we consider a healthy relationship. Have you ever heard any of these statements about love?

- "All you need is love" – The Beatles
- "Love is that condition in which the happiness of another person is essential to your own." — Robert A. Heinlein
- Love is the greatest refreshment in life." — Pablo Picasso
- "We're all a little weird, and life's a little weird. And when we find someone, whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall in mutual weirdness and call it love." — Dr. Seuss

These statements are fitting examples of how humans view love. It's emotional, it's self-serving, and it's satisfying to the soul. But there is a problem with how we view love. The way we normally love is different than the way God loves. The Scriptures teach us about a kind of love that is not driven by one's desire for happiness, nor is it something we come by accidentally, nor is something that must be earned. The Scriptures teach us to love others in the same manner as God. To love unconditionally with the intent of caring for others just as Jesus cares for us. The kind of love taught in the Bible is never selfish and is given freely to all. God loves without consideration of our faults. His love is not based on our performance or whether we deserve it or not. The love of God is a perfect demonstration of His perfect nature. We find the nature of His love on display even in His anger and wrath.

1 John 4:8 and 16 make a profound and complete statement about God and His love. These verses tell us that "*God is Love.*" This is profound because it tells us that God's nature, at its core is love. Why does He love? Because his nature doesn't let Him do anything else. It permeates every attribute of who He is. He doesn't love to be loved. He loves because, He is love!

What does that mean for us? It means that God pours out His essence onto us. His love is poured out on undeserving sinners who choose self over others, where God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are often, part of the "others." The Bible describes us in this way: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*

(Jeremiah 17:9) and from **Romans 3:10-18:**

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to

deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Unlike man’s typical forms of love, God’s love is not romantic, or conditional, or sentimental, or brotherly. Instead, His love is *Agape* love, the highest and purest form of love available. The Father’s Agape love is a selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial love that seeks the highest good for others. God knows each of us individually and loves us personally. Just as a parent knows and cares for each child, God understands our hopes, fears, and dreams. His is a mighty love that has no beginning and no end—a love that surrounds us always and never fades.

The greatest expression of the Father’s love can be found in the gift of His Son Jesus. As you heard earlier and have heard many times throughout your church lives, **John 3:16-17** says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* This is the time of year we focus on the arrival of God’s greatest gift to humanity. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)* The love of The Creator became available to all through the arrival of Jesus. His love became sacrificial on the cross when Jesus fulfilled God’s plan by becoming our replacement. For those of you that have not accepted God’s great gift, I want to encourage you today to receive this gift, the gift of Jesus, into your heart. If God has been drawing you to Himself, you already know. We don’t know, but you do. God’s love doesn’t condemn; it saves.

I realize that no human, including myself, can ever do justice towards properly explaining why God loves us. All I can say for certain is that He sacrificed His Son Jesus on my behalf, on your behalf. Why does God love us so? Because it’s who He is. Remember, “God is love”!

Read 1 John 4:7-21

Invitation