

Advent 2019: Love – 1 John 4:7-11

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[0 : 00] Good morning. So we have reached the topic of love. I feel like it's a topic that's often spoken of maybe even more than the others that we've already hit maybe more than hope joy or peace.

But I feel that I'd probably venture to say that it's probably often even more misunderstood than some of those. And I think in the church, I think we tend to be a bit more focused, have a bit more of a proper view of it.

But because of the surrounding culture, I think we can often have an improper view, get confused. So it's my goal this morning to help us have a good biblical view of love, to think through that well, and what that means for us during this Advent season.

So if you will, go ahead and turn with me to 1 John. We're going to be looking at a very typical love passage in 1 John 4. So go ahead and turn with me there. So we'll be in a few other places this morning as well, but this will be our primary text.

So in 1 John 4, I'd like to be looking at verses 7 through 11. So let's read it. It says, So I'd like to look first at the main point that this passage is communicating, and then we're going to get to some of those particulars that are within it.

[1 : 51] So to begin with, I think we can clearly see that John here is calling us to follow the Lord's model in love, calling us to follow his example. Note at the beginning down in verse, let's see, in verse 11 really, right?

He tells us to, Beloved, let us love one another. And then he gets into a lot, excuse me, that was verse 7. Beloved, let us love one another. Then he gets into a lot of particulars about how the Lord modeled that love for us.

And then down in verse 11, it's kind of bookended, right? It says, He reminds us that if God so loved us, we should follow in that same love. So it's bookended with an urging, right, to love one another. And so if we go even further down into this passage, past verse 11, he keeps going and keeps going with that theme of having us just remember to love one another. But for this morning, we'll stop here. And so with that, with that being the main point, right, of just seeing God's love for us and us to follow in that model, that's how I'd like to structure our study.

So we're going to be really just looking at two points this morning. And the first one will be the Advent love that we have been shown. The Advent love that we have been shown.

[3 : 05] And secondly, that'll be the Advent love that we can show. The Advent love that we can show. So let's jump right into it. The Advent love that we have been shown.

Like I said earlier, right at the beginning of our passage, in verse 7, it explains that love is from God. It goes on to say that anyone who does not show love must not know God because God himself is love.

And then it goes on to explain how the Lord manifested his love or showed it to us or demonstrated his great love for us. It tells us that God sent his only son into the world that we might live through him.

And then in verse 10, he goes on. I really, I think it's so important to see this point. He says that, oh no, the love that we show for each other, or even as he says here, the love that we have for God, that's not the ultimate love.

That doesn't quite meet the standard. That's not the best showing. But instead, he notes the best showing, the best showing of love is the Lord's love for us. He says in verse 10, and this is love, that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

[4 : 14] So this driving point, this great love contrasted with the way we love is the ultimate display. Ours doesn't even come close. It's our Lord sending his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

So let's spend some good time looking at that love because, right, it's cited as the ultimate display. So this act of our Lord becoming a man, dying for our sins is a prime example. And so how does that work? What makes this love so special, so different from all others, so different than our own love that we often show? And so let's look at a couple of passages that talk about that love.

Turn with me to Romans 5. Romans 5. I can't remember if it was last Sunday or the Sunday before that that Reese read a big chunk of Romans 5 during the Lord's Supper.

He described it as the ultimate Advent passage because it mentions, like, all of the themes. I'd like to look at a chunk of it this morning that does speak to love. So let's look at Romans 5.

[5 : 20] Let's look at verses 6 through 8. It says, At the right time, it says that Christ died for us and we're described as weak and as ungodly.

Weak and ungodly. And let's pause on that for a minute. Weak and ungodly. Think about the kind of love that weak and ungodly people can show.

So I think, just thinking about this season, I often hear people talking all about the different Christmas gatherings. They either, they tend to describe them as have to go to or get to go to. And it's so interesting to hear the different perspectives. You'll hear many that seem to be very excited to spend time with people that they very rarely get to see.

Or many people that are very excited to see people that they see all the time. But you'll hear so many that are dreading it. They're not looking forward to spending time with family.

[6 : 50] They're upset about it. For some, it seems that they're overwhelmed with all the details. Maybe they're hosting something and they're stressed about it. Or they're overwhelmed with the number of gatherings they attend.

Or they have long commutes to and from these gatherings. But for many others, I feel like there's a lot of past hurt. Maybe hurt that goes back a generation or two or three or more.

Maybe some issues that have never been talked through. Or maybe personality or belief clashes that can be so hard around a holiday season. But why am I mentioning all of that right now?

Because that's a very clear way that we can contrast the way we choose to love with the way our Lord has chosen to love.

We can see even in that tiniest example that our love is not to the standard. Right? We, when people offend us, or when we're uncomfortable with people, right?

[7 : 51] We can sometimes choose to avoid, can choose to run away, or choose to just stress, dread. Right? But the Lord, his position so high above us, and we described as weak and ungodly.

He still has chosen to love us to the ultimate extent. So let's get back to that weak and ungodly idea. Let's think about our situation as humans.

Think about way back to the beginning. We were nothing. We were nothing at all. We were dust. And there was an eternal God, fully satisfied in himself. And he just, perfectly content, decided to create us.

But our ancestors, Adam and Eve, in the garden, a perfect place. In a perfect place, and they had perfect jobs. They were to work and to keep the most beautiful area we can imagine. But in his foreknowledge and foresight, and also desire to show his great love, he gave us the ability to choose to do good or evil.

To choose to obey or to disobey. And we know the story. We know that Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by doing the exact thing that he had told them not to do. By eating of the fruit of the tree.

[9 : 03] And they immediately felt the guilt. Right? And if we're honest with ourselves, we do something along these lines daily.

We see ourselves choose something that we know is going against the will of the Lord. Every day we are disobeying. We are rebelling against a God who has given us such great opportunity, even now, to have eternal life through knowing him.

We constantly rebel against our great God. But what does this passage that we just read say? It says that he made a way. He made a way for us who choose to disobey our holy God and are therefore deserving of eternal judgment, the wrath of God.

Right? He made a way for us to be forgiven. It says, at the right time, Christ died for the weak, for the ungodly. Right? He chose to pay the debt that our sins earn us.

He died the death and bore the wrath of God that we deserved. He who knew no sin became sin so that in him we could become the righteousness of God.

[10:11] Right? And how did he do this? As well as think about his sacrificial death on the cross. Taking the punishment of our sins. Right? And giving us his righteousness.

The great exchange that we are saved from the wrath of God and welcomed it into his family. Okay. Let's look back at our first John passage. Back in our first John 4.

In verse 9 and 10. It says, In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. And in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Note that it clearly states how God showed his love for us. Right? And that how is through sending his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

So the word propitiation, I think, deserves some time for us to think about. What it means is just a super simple definition for us to think about. Is a sacrifice that bears God's wrath and turns it to favor.

[11:17] So a sacrifice that, excuse me. A sacrifice that bears God's wrath and turns it to favor. We must remember that our sin truly deserves death.

Truly deserves the wrath of God. Because God is holy. He truly loves what is good and hates what is bad. He will punish them. And he will by no means clear the guilty.

And therefore, because of his holiness, but also because of his love for us, he had to punish sin in some way. But desired to show his great love, forgiveness, and his mercy.

And because of this, this is our season. The eternal king, the everlasting God, condescended to become a man. Was born as a man. The great king of the universe.

As we sing, Mary's king is now Mary's child. The fully God and fully man experiencing all of our pains, our fears, our temptations. But yet, he did not sin.

[12:18] Condescended to become a man. But this king knew where he was headed. All of his life pointed to the cross. He had offended many. We can read all throughout the gospels how he offended people time and time again.

Because they saw their sin because of his teaching. The religious leaders of that day were offended that he was getting attention, drawing away from them.

Right? Because he had, he spoke with authority. Right? And they tried to accuse him. They tried to get rid of his ministry. But they could never find any faults. And we know why that was.

Because he was without sin. But yet, his road continued to continue to continue to lead to the cross. Right? But the crucifixion was all part of the plan.

All part of the plan that this eternal God had from the beginning of time. Thinking about the passage that we often talk about in Acts chapter 2.

[13:20] Where it says in verses 22 through 24. Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth. A man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death.

Because it was not possible for him to be held by it. A couple of things that are so important to our topic this morning we can note here. Yes, these people, they were guilty. They saw the signs and wonders and mighty works.

They heard the teachings that Jesus had done right in front of them. They knew he wasn't guilty. But they chose to crucify him. And so, of course, yes, that was a sinful act.

Choosing to kill someone who's an innocent man. But note something here that's so important. This was according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

[14:19] So, if this was a definite plan, part of what God had ordained, his own son being killed, going through all of the troubles of this life, suffering all the temptations and struggles to the fullest extent, what is the purpose of this terrible death?

And we can see just such beautiful as we move along in Acts a little bit, thinking a little bit forward to Acts 4 and the apostles just preaching there and explaining so much about it.

And I'm going to read a little bit from Acts 4, verses 10 through 12. It says, Note something huge.

Hugely important here. Salvation is being tied directly to Jesus. Our salvation, the only hope that we have. This is that propitiation that we were talking about.

God had planned this definite plan to bring about the salvation of his people. He desired to show his great love and mercy to us by bringing us that salvation. But the how, right?

[15:53] Blood had to be shed. But to pay for our infinite offenses against God, there had to be an infinite debt paid. And now think about what our Lord did.

The perfect God of the universe, right? Who became man, chose to take the guilt of our sins upon himself and suffer the punishment that we deserved. Sure, he suffered a brutal, physical, human death.

But he experienced even worse than that. He experienced the wrath of God. The weight of our sin. The worst thing anyone could ever experience.

And what all those found in Christ, not found in Christ, will experience. Now, I'm quite aware I've spent a lot of time explaining all of this, right?

There are a couple reasons why. Firstly, that's foundational to our understanding of the gospel. We must trust in the shed blood of Christ to cover our sins. It's our only hope for salvation.

[16:53] And secondly, it's because this is the perfect display of love. I often think about love as a willingness to do anything for anyone.

I was thinking back to, like, who do I see as someone who has consistently shown me love? And I always, for some reason, immediately think back to my granddad, who's, I mean, incredible.

But I think of one particular instance of crashing my dirt bike into a swimming pool. And his 70-year-old self running down a hill from his house to help us pull it out.

But seriously, there are people that show great love to us. A friend taking a phone call at 3 a.m. when we really need someone. Or someone really inconveniencing themselves to do something that we would enjoy or when we just need them.

But even more so, think about this display of love that the Lord has shown us, right? Romans 5. Think back to where we were, right? You know, some might die for a good person.

[18:02] That's rare, right? But God demonstrated his love for us by dying for who? Right? A bunch of righteous Christians who always do the right thing. Or for the best people in the world who are really close to sinless.

Or for those he knew would eventually follow him. No. None of that. Right? What does it say? He died for sinners. He died for the ungodly. He died for those who spat in his face.

He died for those who reject him until he changes their desires. He died for us. We could never deserve this grace. But he has graciously shown us this greatest act of kindness.

Even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. He truly was willing to do whatever it took to save us. And it took such a great price. Note that the love candle is red.

Right? It symbolizes the ultimate display of God's love for us. His blood shed on our behalf. Christ bore the wrath of God. Suffered the death and punishment that our sin deserves.

[19:06] So this is the great Advent love that we have been shown. Right? Our Lord's willingness to do whatever it took to ransom us. A people who could never deserve it.

So, in light of that great Advent love that we have been shown. Let's think about our second point. And that's the Advent love that we can show. The Advent love that we can show.

So let's get back to our original passage. So flip back to 1 John 4 if you're not already there. All throughout this passage, we can see that us demonstrating love is part of our evidencing that we know God.

It speaks that if people are failing to demonstrate love, they must not truly know God because God is love. Right? It speaks that if we're found in Christ, we must display this love.

And then the end urges us. Verse 11, right? It says, Beloved, if God so loved us, right? All we've just talked about. We also ought to love one another. Ask us to remember how God has loved us.

[20:12] And therefore, because we see that love, we should love each other well. We see so many of these same types of exhortations all through Scripture.

Thinking back to Matthew 22, right? There's a lawyer that is seeking to test Jesus. And what he said was, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. Jesus stresses here

the need for great love.

Firstly to him, right? The Lord. But then he ties us second, right? He states that we must love our neighbor as we love ourselves. In other words, he's assuming, right, that we love ourselves a lot. And we should treat others just as well, if not even better, than ourselves. In other words, right, how we see it elsewhere. To seek others' interests above our own. To count others more significant than ourselves, right?

[21 : 14] To seek to serve rather than to be served. And note the amount of weight he puts on this. He puts on loving God and loving others. He states that on these two commandments, right, depend all the law and the prophets.

Remember that, as Nathan mentioned earlier, he didn't come to abolish the law, but rather to fulfill the law, right? So here he's stressing the importance, right, of our love for God and our love for others as the great high calling of the law and the prophets.

And in another passage, if y'all will turn here, Colossians 3, we see something similar. And I think we could even see a slight, but even more intense part of it.

So Colossians 3. I think way back, probably four or five years ago, when I was in college at North Georgia, this passage really struck me, and there's part of it that I think really shows us the high standard of the love that the Lord wants us to display.

So verses 12 through 17 here in Colossians 3, it says, Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

[22 : 29] As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

And in a somewhat parallel passage to this, over in Ephesians 5, Paul is giving some instruction to husbands. He says, Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for her.

So note something similar happening in both the Colossians passage we just read, and in that verse in Ephesians. And what it is, is highlighted in verse 13 of Colossians 3.

It says, Bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. And catch this, as the Lord has forgiven you, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

[23 : 41] Catch that. Paul is calling us here to the same type of forgiveness that the Lord has demonstrated. That's massive. Because think about the forgiveness that the Lord has shown us.

Remember that we have infinite offenses against his great holiness. And he was the one who bore the suffering for it. He bore the wrath of God.

He took the full weight of what our sin, which was directly against him, was deserving of. And then because of his great love, our sin is now wiped clean.

He doesn't just leave us alone at that point. He welcomes us into his family. Fully knowing, fully understanding even our present failings, our future failings.

It's not a conditional forgiveness. It's not a conditional love. The love here in Ephesians that we just read about, right? It says even like giving our own selves up, right?

[24 : 44] The highest thing we could do to love another person. It's recalled to the same type of love, the same type of forgiveness that the Lord has demonstrated.

Think about the realities that we experience at times of when we're maybe even legitimately trying to forgive someone. We often say we've forgiven someone, but then we see a similar circumstance or a similar struggle coming up, and we remind ourselves and sometimes even remind them to our shame of the past situation and hold it against them.

Or we say we've forgiven someone and then simply choose to not be around them or avoid them.

Or we say we've forgiven someone, but then we go and talk about them to others through gossip.

Or even more subtle and possibly more dangerous because of it, we say we've forgiven someone, but we harbor some sort of memory or the unforgiveness or bitterness down deep in our hearts and

hold on to it where it makes our hearts hard as it festers.

This is not what we're called to. We're called to the same type of forgiveness and love that our Savior displayed. And remember that our Lord has not only chosen to do whatever it took to ransom us, but our debts are paid, our sins are no more, right?

[26 : 18] He doesn't remember them anymore. And then by the resurrection, we are given new life. We are reconciled to Him. And so because of that, we are called to display that same type of love and forgiveness.

To even go to the extent to lay our own lives down for the sake of others. To truly reconcile so much as it depends on us. To demonstrate that same love that Christ has shown us.

We have to remember that we're so undeserving. And so when those around us seem or are so undeserving, we must love well. Remember that we are the wretch that by God's marvelous love is now God's treasure.

It's by His grace that we are part of His family. Nothing good that we have done. It's His wounds that have paid our ransom. And therefore, we should be willing to show that same grace, that same love, that same mercy to those around us who, yes, have wronged us.

None of us deserve anything. Those who have hurt us so much are those that are incredibly inconvenient to love. And when those relationships are so hard, we can so often help each other by simply choosing to show grace, to show love, show undeserved kindness.

[27 : 36] 1 Peter 4.8 says, Above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins. Right? At a time when Jesus was getting closer and closer to the cross, He made this statement in John chapter 13, verses 34 and 35.

He said, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Know that Jesus is just as firm in this statement as the passages that Paul wrote earlier, that, well, Paul wrote, that we read earlier. Just as He had loved the disciples and now just as He loved us, that is the same love that we are called to.

To give out all of ourselves for the sake of others' souls. And after all of that, note something, I think, really convicting for me and for, I'm sure, many of us.

Note that our Lord explains that this is how people will know that we are truly following Him. They will feel that they must truly be following Christ as they see our love for each other. And being real with ourselves, I know myself, and I feel like our CFC church culture and our church culture as a whole can often be really heavy in knowledge.

[29 : 00] We've heard Nathan's reference to babies with large heads time and time again, right? That's often us. So I'd like to try to land the sermon a little bit by looking at a passage that reminds us of all of the outworkings, the characteristics of love.

So the typical love passage, 1 Corinthians 13. So turn there. 1 Corinthians 13. We're going to look at the first seven verses here.

It says, If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I'm nothing.

If I give away all I have and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

[30 : 27] Ultimately, this describes the love that Christ has for us and we must be living out that love, that love that he has shown us, a love that continues to love no matter what.

He has bestowed such great love upon us by paying the ultimate sacrifice of his blood which ultimately leads to our forgiveness and our reconciliation. Let's model the same for each other. This is not an easy thing. Thinking back to even this morning, Margaret and I had some conflict that was entirely my fault and I was astounded at when I started to remind myself and when we together were remembering the love that Christ had for us, how quickly we reconciled because we understand who we are, how undeserving of grace that we are in the scheme of looking at God's holiness and in light of that, how we can truly forgive each other no matter what the offense.

And so it's hard. It's hard to show this love and I think the reason why is because we are humans, right? We are sinful. We make mistakes.

We consistently go against our new nature. But this is the love that we're called to, the same love that Christ has shown us. Go ahead and grab your bulletins.

[31 : 59] There's a quote on it by Jonathan Edwards. I think it goes very well with this first Corinthians passage. It says, All of the fruits of the Spirit which we are to lay weight upon as evidential of grace are summed up in charity or Christian love because this is the sum of all grace.

So this season, let's look well to Christ's perfect example of love and in doing that, looking to his example, show that same love for each other. So let's pray.