

Loved to Love

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Date: 10 June 2018

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- [0 : 00] Good evening, Church of the Advent. Such a blessing to be with y'all. It's a privilege to be with y'all again. If you would, please join me as we go to our Heavenly Father in prayer.
- Heavenly Father, I pray now that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart would be acceptable in your sight.
- Father, please help me to speak as one who speaks the oracles of God. Father, I pray that you would stir the affections of our hearts now to love Christ more.
- Help us to see your love through the scriptures and give us the grace by the power of your Holy Spirit to display your love to one another into the watching world.
- I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Church of the Advent, I want to ask you a question.
- [1 : 14] What is love? And I'm not expecting you to answer it from your seat. But I want to ask that question. I just want you to think about it. What is love?
- When you think of the word love, L-O-V-E, what comes to mind? Most people in the world think that love is some kind of overwhelming emotion that overtakes you.
- They interpret love kind of like the fairy tale that we have all heard about. The fairy tale about Cupid, some chubby boy that flies around with little wings shooting people with love arrows causing them to fall helplessly in love.
- Well, that picture of love is not only phony and false, but it's limited to only emotions.
- True love moves beyond words. God's love moves beyond words and feelings to actions.
- [2 : 28] The Bible says that God is love. And in his word, we see that his love is not only revealed by his words, but also by his actions.
- The title of my sermon this evening is Loved to Be or Loved to Love. Loved to Loved.
- And we are going to see in 1 John chapter 4 verses 7 through 12 that God, who is love, manifested his love in Christ and continues to display his love through the church.
- So if you want to know what my main idea is, it's this. God, who is love, manifested his love in Christ and he continues to display his love through the church.
- These six verses show God's love to us and how God's love ought to be displayed through us.
- [3 : 40] In verses 7 and 8, we are going to see that God is the source of love. In verses 9 and 10, we are going to see God manifest his love in Christ.
- And in verses 11 and 12, we are going to see that God continues to display his love through the church. So look with me, if you have your Bibles, look with me at verses 7 and 8.
- God is the source of love. Verse 7 reads, Beloved, or beloved could be translated dear friends. Dear friends, let us love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

I mean, this first verse, this verse in chapter 7, I'm sorry, in verse 7, this verse in verse 7 is self-explanatory.

I mean, you could just read it and it's very clear. Beloved, dear friends, let us love one another. So you have John who's communicating his love for the individual he's talking to, the individuals he's talking to.

[5 : 02] When he says, beloved, dear friends, he's communicating his love, but then he tells them what they should be doing. Let us love one another. Why? Because love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

He's pointing out that as Christians, we should love one another if we are truly God's children. And the reason why is because children reflect the characteristics of their parents.

So if God is the source of love, then those who are his children should reflect his nature, his characteristics, and they should reflect his love to others.

And he's pointing out that whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. The individuals that love, they have been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

They have been transformed and God has worked so much in their hearts to where they love not only God, but they love people. And it's evidence that they know God.

[6 : 10] Now I want to make very clear that unbelievers can love too. Unbelievers are able to love because they have been created in the image of God. But their love is incomplete.

Only born-again, regenerated believers can love the way God has called us to love because the Holy Spirit that now lives inside of us empowers us to love with a sacrificial Christ-like love.

love. I mean, as we read the scriptures, if y'all remember, there's passages in the Bible, like for instance, one that points out how that it's easy to love those who love you back.

And the Bible says even tax collectors do that. Even unbelievers do that. But it's hard to love someone who doesn't love you back. And that's when Christ is displayed.

Not just when we love people that love us back, but mainly when we love people who don't love us back. Because, I mean, look at how Jesus loved people.

[7 : 18] He loved his enemies. He loved people who crucified him on a cross. Not only that, he prayed for them. And then Matthew 5 tells us that we are to love our enemies as well.

Matthew, in the Beatitudes, you just see Matthew 5, 6, and 7 where the Christian life is painted and it displays a picture of what the Christian life looks like.

And we see within those chapters that it says to love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you. So we are to reflect this love.

And we are to do it by the power of the Holy Spirit. And we have the power to do so. And in verse 8, he goes on to say, anyone who does not love does not know God.

Why? Because God is love. I mean, this is huge what he's saying. He's like, if you don't love, if you don't love, you don't know God.

[8 : 20] Because God is love. Because God is the source of love. if we're really his children, then we're going to display Jesus to others.

It's like, man, if we don't show that, we don't know him. Now, don't get me wrong, there's times where we fall short of that because we're sinners. But if we find this consistent coldness in our heart to not want to love one another, to not want to love people in the body, to not want to love people in the body of Christ, we need to examine ourselves.

Because the Bible makes it very clear that if anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

So, 1 John 4.20 says, if you can't love the person that's right in front of you that you can see, talk with, touch, then how are you going to say that you could love God who you can't see?

So, the scriptures is making it very clear that the Christian ought to display love. Love to each other in the body of Christ and love the unbelievers.

[9 : 47] In verses 9 and 10, we see God manifested his love in Christ. Verse 9 says, in this, the love of God was made manifest or noticeable or visible among us that God sent his son and not just anyone, God sent his only son into the world that we might live through him.

Now, a lot of times we read verses like that and we just gloss right over it. But we would do well to really read verses like this slowly and to really meditate on what is being said here.

So, I'm going to read it one more time. In this, the love of God was made manifest or noticeable, visible.

in this, the love of God was made visible among us that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him.

Now, just take a moment to imagine. Here it is, God, the creator of the universe. God, who can't even look upon sin, looks at this world filled with corruption, filled with sin, filled with filth, and he sends his son into this world.

[11 : 35] He sent his son into a world that was filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossipers, slanderers, haters of God, haughty, boastful people who the Bible calls inventors of evil.

I mean, they're thinking of how to do evil. The Bible says that they're inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, people who were disobedient to parents.

He sent his son into a world that was full of foolish people, faithless people, and ruthless people. God sent his only son into a world filled with sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, homosexuality, jealousy, fits of anger, robberies, dissensions, divisions, drunkenness, orgies, a world full of drug addicts and prostitutes and fornicators and liars, a world full of self-righteous people.

The list goes on and on and on, but the reason why I want to name these specific things and go through this list so you can see that God who is holy took his only son.

He sent him. He sent his only son. God the father sent his only son into a corrupt world, a sinful world like this. Why?

[13 : 39] Because he loved us. Because he loved us. He knew what he was doing. It's kind of like when you think of ISIS and we know what ISIS has been doing in regard to slaughtering Christians and you know the U.S.

has sent troops over there at times to take them out. But imagine this. God sent his son on enemy lines just like the U.S.

sent troops on enemy lines and where the U.S. took their enemies out. Jesus Christ went to enemy lines and he didn't take out his enemies but he gave his life for them. Jesus Christ didn't take out his enemies but he died for them.

And this is what we see in Romans 5 8 where it says that God demonstrated his love towards us that while we were still sinners he sent his son Jesus Christ to die.

It was when we were giving him the middle finger that he said, that's when I'm going to send my son Jesus Christ to die for you. It's when we were in rebellion running the opposite direction that he sent his son Jesus to die for us.

[15 : 13] This is a type of love that is hard for anyone to understand because we're used to loving people when they love us. And a lot of times when people treat us bad we got to wrestle with all of these different emotions in order to respond back with love.

But God's love is not like our love. His love is consistent. His love never fluctuates. His love is always the same. His love is relentless.

His love pursues us in our deepest mess. And his love never fails. verse 10 says, In this is love not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins.

This reminds us of when the Bible says the only reason we love him is because he first loved us. If we love him it's because he first loved us.

If we're pursuing God it's because he first pursued us. If we want God it's because God has so warmed our hearts by the power of his Holy Spirit to where we want to surrender our lives to him because we've been captivated by his love.

[16 : 37] Maybe you're in here tonight and you're saying man I don't know if anyone loves me. Maybe you've been forsaken abused maybe there's been those who have walked away from you.

Maybe you've just been hurt and you're wondering if there's anyone who loves me. Well I want to let you know that there is for sure and if you ever want to know whether or not God loves you just look at the cross of Jesus Christ.

Jesus died. that's how much he loves you. He gave his life so that sinners like us who were on their way to hell could be rescued and given eternal life.

On that cross he bore the wrath of God. So when it says here that he sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins, the word propitiation means that Jesus was offered up as an atonant sacrifice for our sins.

He turned away the wrath of God. The wrath that was meant to be poured out upon me and poured out upon you, Jesus turned away that wrath with his blood when it was spilt out of his body for sinners like you and I.

[18 : 13] The Bible says in Isaiah that it pleased God to crush him. He was crushed. Jesus was crushed by God the Father in my place and in your place so that we would never, ever have to experience the wrath.

But now all we experience is mercy, love, kindness, grace from the Father. And his love towards you doesn't change when you do wrong.

His love towards you doesn't change when you read your Bible, when you seem to be doing a bunch of righteous works. His love doesn't change when you fall, when you make mistakes because his love is not dependent upon our works, but it's dependent upon what Christ did on the cross.

cross. Imagine Jesus hanging on that cross. Imagine him dying for you.

And they were mocking him. You had thieves on each side. One of the thieves were mocking him. This is a man that they beat, they ripped his back the shreds, they put a crown of thorns on his head, blood is gushing down his face, and they're crucifying him on the cross.

[19 : 41] And here it is, Jesus, on that cross, he tries to muster up just enough strength to lift himself up just enough to be able to say a few words. And I'm sure those who were looking upon him were like, what is he going to say?

He's probably going to curse us from the ways that we've been treated him. And you know what comes out of his mouth? Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Here it is that his enemies are killing him. And his response to them is, I forgive you. I love you. And he gives his life for them.

God loves in a way that a lot of us can't even comprehend. I want to read a passage to you.

If you have a Bible, I would love for you to turn there with me. And if you don't, just remember where this is located. This is in John 15 verse 9.

[20 : 49] John 15 verse 9. And this is what it reads. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

And then he says, abide in my love. Remember the first time I read that, I was like, what? Jesus is saying, as the Father has loved me, so I love you?

now I don't know about you, but I wrestled when I read that because I said, well maybe he loves me 50% as much as the Father loves him.

Maybe Jesus loves me 75% as much as the Father loves me, but there's no possible way that Jesus can love me in the same way that the Father loves him.

But this is what the Bible says, that Jesus Christ loves you as the Father has loved him. And then he says this, abide in my love.

[22 : 00] Can you imagine that the King of the universe, God, that Jesus who is God loves you in the same way the Father loves him?

That's ridiculous, but it's true. It's true. In the last two verses, we see that God continues to display his love through the church.

So God is the source of love, he manifested his love in Jesus Christ, and he continues to display his love through the church. Verse 11 says, beloved, loved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another.

Again, this is another verse we just don't want to gloss over. The Bible says, beloved, friends, dear friends, if God so loved us, if he so loved us, what's the reaction?

We ought to love one another. brother, it's one thing for me to say that I love you. It's a whole other thing for me to say, I love you so much.

[23 : 26] I love you so much. And that's what the Bible says. If God so loved you, then we ought to love one another. A lot of us know John 3, 16, where it says God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

But again, even in quoting that scripture, we need to slow down because again, the text says, God so loved the world. He so loved you that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

And a lot of us are familiar with John 3, 16, but we need to become just as familiar with 1 John, 3, 16, where it says, by this, by this we know love, that he, Jesus Christ, laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

1 John 3, 16 makes it very clear that because Christ laid down his life for us, our response is to lay down our lives for the brothers, to lay down our lives for each other.

As Christians, we are called to do whatever we can to lay down our lives for one another because we are walking in the footsteps of our Savior. Verse 12 says, no one has ever seen God.

[25 : 02] If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us. I love this verse. This verse tells us that nobody can see God with their physical eyes loving them.

And Jesus is no longer in the world to manifest God's love for natural eyes to see. but God continues to demonstrate his love through his people, through his church.

When outsiders look upon Christians loving one another and loving other people, they get a glimpse of God's love. This morning I shared this story that I think you would be encouraged by but actually felt led to share another story tonight that I think you'll be encouraged by as well.

It's a story about Christian love, Christian sacrifice. A couple of months ago I had the privilege to preach at a church called La Plata Baptist Church and I preached at an event called Hope Night.

And before I had the privilege to go up and preach God's word, I got to hear these amazing testimonies of people testifying of how God's love transformed them.

[26 : 24] And I remember sitting there listening to these two women and it rocked me. And they were standing on stage. One woman was named Vivian, the other woman was named Sunny.

And Sunny had met Vivian when she was at school. They're both school teachers. So she met Vivian at the school. and she started sharing the gospel with Vivian and eventually they got together for a Bible study and Sunny had learned that Vivian needed a kidney.

And she had learned that if Vivian did not get a kidney, that she was going to die. And somewhere within that Bible study and praying, Sunny felt prompted by the Holy Spirit that she was supposed to give her kidney to Vivian.

She was thinking like, man, my husband would never, ever believe that this is something that I feel the Lord's leading me to do. But she went home and shared it with her husband. And her husband was okay with it.

To make a long story short, they eventually went to the doctors and this was after Sunny had to basically talk Vivian into it. Because Vivian was like, there's no way that I'm going to allow you to give me your kidney.

[27 : 47] And Sunny said, listen, you need my kidney more than I do. You're a mother of three and they need you. So they go to the doctors, their blood type is the same, everything is perfect as far as what needs to be done for them to perform the surgery.

And this woman sat on the operating table and let doctors cut her open, they took out her kidney and they gave her kidney to another woman. She gave her kidney to her.

And I'm sitting here listening to this and I'm watching these two people in the church and Vivian is just weeping and crying. Sunny is just so thankful that she was able to display the love of Christ.

And I'm like, this is incredible. And to the watching world, they can't understand it. It was in the newspaper. I mean, they just couldn't understand how is this possible? Why would somebody do this?

Well, when you think of what Christ has done for us, it really does move you to lay down your life for others.

[28 : 59] And I'm not saying that any of you in here have to display the love of Christ by giving a kidney, but God might call you to do that. And as Christians, may we be willing to do whatever it takes to display the love of Jesus if he calls us to that.

Here it is, Vivian is attending the church faithfully, and she's been rocked by the love of Christ. And God has been so good to Sunny as well, because now she has experienced more of God's love through her surrenderance in that way.

Food for thought. like heat that comes from a fire, or sunlight that shines from the sun. Love should spill out of the Christian, because God is love.

Here's a few closing thoughts. If we truly know God and are children of God, we will sacrificially love one another.

In other words, this is a cause and effect relationship. The cause is that you are born again in a child of God, and the effect is that you will sacrificially love people.

[30 : 28] Ephesians 5 says, as beloved children of God, we must be imitators of him. 1 Corinthians 13 says that we could be doing a bunch of things, even religious things, and even sacrificial things that are void of genuine love, things that are meaningless.

But genuine love really reveals itself from the inside out, in our heart, in our thoughts, in our speech, and in our relationships with people.

Church of the Advent, let us pray that we would love genuinely, and that love would be the thing that drives us.

Because this is the fruit of the Spirit, it's not something that we can create or make happen. We must pray earnestly for God to help us grow in our sacrificial love towards each other.

We must pray like the Apostle Paul did in Ephesians, that we would have the strength to comprehend with all of the saints what is the breadth, and the length, and the height, and the depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

[31 : 54] knowledge. We are able to sacrificially love brothers and sisters because God first sacrificially loved us, and he has empowered us by the power of his Holy Spirit to love others.

For you who are here today who may not know Jesus, I just want to say, never forget that God is the definition of love. He revealed his love toward you by sending his son Jesus to die on the cross for you.

The Bible tells us to repent of our sins and to trust in him for the forgiveness of our sins. Love paid the death penalty for your sins.

Love paid the death penalty for your sins against a holy and righteous and just God. Receive this love of God in Christ today and you will be forgiven.

You will become a part of the family of God and you will receive everlasting life. You will have the privilege to know God and to experience his love forever.

[33 : 15] forever. Let us pray. Let us pray. Amen. Let us pray.