

God Loves You

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[0 : 0 0] You know, I think you probably agree that that is just a beautiful song, but you know what! It's about is even more beautiful to think about the birth of Jesus Christ. And it's a beautiful thing, and yet it's also something that we really are supposed to celebrate.

And when you celebrate something, what kind of emotions do you have when you celebrate something? Joy? Happiness? Anything else? Excitement? Those are things that we should have as we think about the birth of Jesus Christ because we understand what that means in our lives, that it makes all the difference. And sometimes I think we kind of forget that, especially that last one that was mentioned, excitement. Are you excited about being in church this morning? Okay, I hope so.

Because so often, you know, what are you doing Sunday morning? Oh, I'm going to church. Getting ready and going to church. It should be something we are excited to do, to know that we get to come and be in the presence of a God that loves us, that we get to sing songs together to give praise to Him. We get to read from His Word, which is God's message to us. And it makes all the difference in our lives. It gives us hope and peace and joy, and God shows us His love. We should be excited about that. So I hope you're excited to be in church this morning. And I hope also that you have brought your Bibles. And we have been in the book of Romans, and we're going to be in Romans once again. And this morning, we're in Romans chapter 13. So I'd encourage you to turn there. And again, just a reminder, when you come, if you have forgotten your Bible, there's a whole rack of Bibles in the foyer.

Feel free to grab one of those if you forgot your Bible. If you do not own a Bible, or you know someone that needs a Bible, take one of those and don't return it. Give it to somebody that needs it, or if you're in need of a Bible, that's what they're there for. We need to have God's Word in our hands and in our hearts as well. So Romans chapter 13 is where we're at this morning, and we're going to be sharing verses 8 through 10. And I know you just sat down, but I'm going to ask you to stand up if you're able as we read God's Word this morning.

Romans chapter 13, beginning in verse 8. And this is what God's Word shares with us today. Owe no man anything but to love one another. For he that loves another has fulfilled the law.

[2 : 2 7] For this you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet. And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Love works no ill to his neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Let's pray. Lord God, thank You again for Your Word. And I pray, Lord, that You teach us from it this morning and that we would understand the things that You want us to understand. Lord, I believe You have a message for each one of us that's here. We're not here by accident or by coincidence that You have brought us to this place because You have something You want to share with us. So Lord, I just pray that we have ears that are open, hearts that are open, that we're able to forget about all the activities that we have coming up. And Lord, I know this time of year there are so many things, whether it is gifts that need wrapped or parties that we need to go to or family gatherings. But Lord, for the next few moments, just help us to set those aside in our minds and to truly be able to focus on You and on Your Word and on Your message for us and on what Christmas is truly all about. Thank You again, Lord, for Your presence in this place. And it's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

You can be seated this morning. Do you like simple things? Do you like it when things are summed up into something short and kind of compact and easily understood? Do you like that? I know in my life I do because sometimes things can get complicated in a hurry, can't they? I know that there are some things in my life as I look back and different experiences I've had, there are some things that I just, I wish were a lot more simple. Whether it is filling out forms sometimes or instructions or I think all the way back to high school. I remember several classes that I had, one of which I've mentioned before and that was, it was called advanced math at the time. And basically what advanced math was, was all these mathematical formulas. How many of you like those kind of things? You people are strange.

I'm just kidding. But you look at all these mathematical formulas and most of the time I went through that class and I had no clue what the teacher was talking about. I truly didn't. Eric, you were in the class. Did I know what was going on? Yeah. Teacher put a problem on the board. Baker get up there and solve it. I'd go up and stand there and he said, you have no idea what you're doing, do you? Nope. No, I don't. And I wished at the time that just, there was just one thing that it could be summed up that I could understand. But it wasn't. It was very complicated. And you know what? God's Word is not like that. It is not complicated. Now there are things about it that you can study. You can get into prophecy in the book of Revelation or Daniel and some of those things.

Yeah, there's a lot there that's hard to understand. But folks, the basics of God's Word are not complicated. It can be summed up in just a few very easy to understand things.

[5 : 48] And this morning as we think about Advent and as we talk about the fourth Sunday of Advent, which is all about love, there is a reason that love is the final one that we talk about.

Because all of it really is summed up in that one thing, in that word love. And as Sarah shared when she was up here and she and Caleb were lighting the candle, we use that word and misuse that word in a lot of different ways. Sarah talked about the fact that we say we love everything from pizza to ball teams and whatever. We use that word a lot, don't we? Would you agree with that?

And a lot of times we're using that word love in a way that is really not what the Bible is talking about. Because the Bible is talking about how deep the word love really is and how it really does sum up so much in God's Word. If you look, it says at the end of verse 8 that we started with, he that loves one another has fulfilled what? The law. Okay, what is the law?

But what is the law it's talking about? It says you fulfilled the law, so what is it we've fulfilled? Okay, we think of the Ten Commandments, that's part of God's law, right? And then there are a lot of other things the Bible talks about, and it lists several of them, the things you shall not do, adultery and all those other things as listed there. But when it says fulfilled the law, the law was God's message to people for what we were supposed to do, how we were supposed to act or not act.

That's what the law was. And it's saying here that all the law that's talked about in the Bible, it says it's fulfilled in this one thing, he that loves one another. It says it's fulfilled the law.

[7 : 46] In other words, if we do that, we are fulfilling what God wants from us. We're doing what God wants us to be doing if we love. You know, it has a whole list of things we shall not do here, right?

Look at verse 9. Look there. There's a whole lot of nots there. You notice that? You shall not commit adultery. You shall not kill. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not... That's a lot of nots, isn't it? Do you like being told what you can't do?

All right. Nobody wants to be honest. Do you like being told what you can't do? You know, sometimes we get the attitude, if somebody tells us we can't do something, what's the first thing we want to do? Yeah, I remember when my kids were little. Any of you that have young ones, you tell them, don't do that. What are they going to focus on right after that?

Yeah, do it not... They're going to focus on the thing you told them not to do. We watched three of our granddaughters yesterday for a few hours. And of course, we have the Christmas tree up. And the littlest one, Lily, what do you think she's fascinated with?

The Christmas tree, obviously, right? What don't you want a little one to do when you have a Christmas tree up? Grab it, shake it, pull it, any of those things, right? So it's like, Lily, no, stay away from the tree. As soon as you say that, what does she make a beeline for?

[9 : 23] Tree. And she's young, you turn and you set her the other direction, and what does she do? Tree. Turns right around, straight back to the tree. How often are we like that as adults?

We're told what we can't do, and then that's what we focus on because that's what we want to do. It's like, don't tell me what I can and can't do. We sometimes get that attitude. But I don't think God wants us to focus. He wants us to follow these, all these knots.

But again, He sums it up that we fulfill all that if we love one another. It's as simple as that. It's not all about the knots, but it's about what we should do. Because if we do love one another, are you going to commit adultery? No. If we do love one another, are you going to kill?

No. If we do love one another, are you going to steal? Are you going to lie? Are you going to covet what somebody else has if you love them? Again, it says, if you love, you're fulfilling all these. Because folks, love is a huge word that has a whole lot of depth and meaning to it. If we love someone, it's not about what we can get. And all these things God tells us not to do, they're really all about what we want to get. Isn't that true? Isn't it?

You shall not commit adultery. When adultery is committed, why does that happen? Because it's something you want, something you want to get. You look on down, it says, you shall not kill. It's because there's something you want to do. You want to get rid of that person. You want to lie. It's things about what you want to get, but God's saying, love is not that. Love is about giving. That is truly what love is about. But again, we use that word love in so many different ways. You know, we say we love different foods. I don't know. What's your favorite food? I heard a lot of pizzas, right?

[11 : 18] You like pizza, apparently. You love pizza, so what do you want to do? You want to get some, right? Isn't that it?

But that's not what the real love that the Bible is talking about is all about. Because again, it's not about what you can get. Love is about giving. The Bible says God is love. And do you understand that our God is all about giving? Do we really understand that? I want you to look in this is a verse that I'm sure you don't have to look up that you probably know, but look in Gospel of John 3. How many of you know John 3.16 by heart?

Why is that a verse that we often memorize and learn? Why do you think? It's not the shortest one in the Bible. I know a lot of times people want to memorize the shortest one in the Bible. You know, it's only two words. Jesus wept. Two words.

There, you know, you learned a new verse this morning. This is not the shortest verse, so why is it one that we often memorize? Because it's so important. John 3.16 and 17, look at what it says. For God so loved the world. So here we're talking about the love that God has.

And it says the world. That means the world and everybody that's in it. He loved it enough that He did what? He gave. So again, what is love all about? It's about giving. It's not about what we can get. It's about what we can give. And God showed us the greatest example of that. He so loved the world because of that love, He gave the world something. He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. So Christmas is all about what God gave, isn't it? And again, why did He give it? Tells us right here, God so loved the world.

[13 : 24] For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. God gave because of His love. I want you to look at another verse. Last place I'm going to have you turn to 1 John, not the Gospel of John, but 1, 2, and 3 John, towards the back of your Bible.

1 John 4, verses 9 through 12. This again confirms God's love results in giving. 1 John 4, verse 9, this is what it says.

In this was manifested or shown the love of God toward us. So again, it's talking about God's love towards us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.

So God sent His Son. When you send something, you're giving it, aren't you? You're sending it. You're giving it to someone else. Here in His love, not that we love God, but that He loved us.

And sent or gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to do what? Love one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us because He has given us of His Spirit. So it's talking about God's love. And how do we know we have God's love? It says so right there. How do we know? Look at it again. It's not complicated. I'll give you a minute. Hereby, verse 13, hereby know we that we dwell in Him so we know that we're in Him and He in us by our love that we have for others. That's how, folks. That's how we know God's love dwells in us, that He gave us His love so that we can then give love to others. Folks, that's what

[15 : 42] Christmas is truly all about. Loving God and loving others. That sums it all up. I told you I like things in a nutshell. You want to understand Christianity. Jesus did the same thing. He summed it up when they asked Him what were the two most important commandments. And He says, love God and love your neighbor as yourself. You do that and the rest of it will take care of itself.

That's pretty simple, isn't it? Simple to understand. Is it always simple to do? Is it always easy to love other people? You know anybody that gets under your skin? Don't point to the person beside you. Don't point to your spouse. But do you know anybody that sometimes is difficult to get along with? Don't point, but maybe it is your spouse. I'm saying that in all honesty. Or maybe it's your child. Or maybe it's your parent. Or a brother. Or a sister. Or a relative. Or a neighbor. Or a co-worker. We all have people in our lives that are hard to get along with, don't we? That might be you for somebody else. You realize that, right? But folks, the love that God shows us. Why does He show us that love? Because we're so good? Because we've earned it?

Because we're so perfect? Why does He show us that love? Because He loves us. He shows us that love despite our faults. We understand that, right? How many of you have faults?

Everybody should put your hand up. Turn to the person next to you. Tell them you have faults. Tell them. Take a minute. I don't care if you know them or not. Tell them because it's true.

Now turn to them and say, but I love you anyway. Isn't that really what God tells us in His Word? We have faults. We fall short. That's what the Bible says.

[17 : 49] And yet God says, I still love you. He doesn't always love what we do. But He loves us even when we fall short. He loves us even in our imperfections.

Even with all of our faults and flaws, God loves us. Folks, we are supposed to have that kind of love to people around us. Love God and love others. Folks, if you focus on that and if you're able to do that, guess what? You've fulfilled all the rest of the stuff that the Bible talks about by loving God and loving each other. And folks, that is what Christmas is all about. It's about love.

God loving us enough to send His Son. It says, He so loved the world. That means everybody in it, right? Do you think He agreed with everything the world was doing? No. But He loved it enough anyway that He sent His Son. That's the kind of love God has for us. And folks, I hope we understand that love.

And then I hope we strive to have that kind of love for people around us. Not just during the Christmas season, but year-round. When you have somebody that maybe you have a hard time loving, remember you're not always lovable either, and yet God still loves you. And I'm not saying that in an accusing way, because I'm in that boat too. There are times I'm not real lovable. If Tammy were here this morning, she'd probably nod and say, yeah, that's true. I'm not always lovable, and yet, you know what I know?

God loves me anyway. I hope each one of you know that you are loved. God loves you. Love Him back, and then share that kind of love with each other.

[19 : 35] That's what it's all about. It's a nutshell. It sums it all up. It's about love, folks. Let's have that kind of love. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank You once again for this day that You've given us for this morning. And Lord, each day is a gift that You allow us to have, so we thank You for it.

And Lord, we thank You as we think about the Christmas season. I know that we can read the story about Christmas, and we can know all the facts. But Lord, help us not to forget the reason why. That God sent His Son, we know that. That's a fact. That He lived on this earth, that's a fact.

That He was perfect, that's a fact. That He died for us, that's a fact. That He rose again, and that's a fact too. We can know all those facts. But help us not to forget the reason all that happened, and that was because we have a lot of faults, and we needed salvation. Help us not to forget the reason behind it that God did that because He loves us, even in our faults. So Lord, I just pray that You'd just help each one of us to realize that we are here, first of all, to love the God that created us, and then we are called to love those around us. Help us to do that in our lives, Lord. It's not always easy, but give us the grace, give us the wisdom, and the strength to be able to do that each and every day. Thank You again, Lord, for Your presence in this place and in our lives. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

We're going to close with a song, and I don't know what we're singing this morning. Jesus Loves Me. Great song to close with. But as we close, the altar's open. You know, God is always ready to meet with us. He's always willing to talk with us. This morning, if we sing, if God has impressed your heart that you need to make sure that you're showing your love to Him and others, maybe you haven't been doing that the way that you need to. Ask God to forgive you. He will.

Ask God to give you strength to do it better. He'll do that too. But the altar's open if you want to come and talk to the Lord this morning. I want to thank you for being here this morning and just remind you that you are loved. God loves you. Now, as you leave this place, strive to share that love with other people that are around you each and every day of your life. Also, I want to ask this morning, if you're able, we'd ask you to go out the main exits. Just got a letter and some other things we'd like to give you and just a small gift from Tammy and I. And then also, we have a Christmas bag for each one of the kids. So if you can go out the main entrance, that would be wonderful.

[22 : 09] Let's bow our heads as we close in prayer. Lord God, thank You again for this morning that You've given us. Lord, as we leave this place, help us to remember that our work here is not done. It's just starting. Lord, as we leave here, we need to show Your love, and that can be hard at times.

But help us to do that as we experience Your love to then share that with others. Lord, help us to remember the true meaning behind Christmas that You sent out of Your love, Your Son, to come to this earth because of us, because of our need, Lord. So we thank You for that. Lord, just give each one that's in here just a wonderful Christmas. Bless them richly, Lord. In the name of Jesus, we pray. And all God's family said, Amen. Merry Christmas. Also, remember our Christmas candle service tonight at 7 o'clock.

Thank you.