04/12/2022

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 December 2022

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0:00] Nonetheless, we have to start with a promise, which is found in Genesis 3.15, and it is the first promise of Jesus Christ, given the fact that the world is now fallen, and given the need that people need saving, and given the condition of the world in corruption, and people are also corrupt in sinfulness.

And so, in Genesis 3.15, after Adam and Eve have rebelled against the word of God, have listened to someone else other than God, and have gone in that way, God's love is then extended to them with a promise.
And the promise in Genesis 3.15 is, in fact, perhaps I should take it back to verse 14 as I did previously. The Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock, and above all beasts of the field.
On your belly you shall go, and on the dust you shall eat, all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.
He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. And of course, that's not only speaking of the promise of Christ, the offspring of the woman, but of course the suffering of Christ in the bruising there.
[1:32] Now, before I read out the next text, I think it's going to be important that we remember just a couple of things, and that is why the promise is even made in the first place.

God has to make a promise to us, his people, for a very simple reason, that we find ourself in a condition that we cannot get out of by our own strength or endeavor or by our own genius, you know, cunningness or whatever it may be.
And last week we looked at the promise from the principle of hope. The moment the promise is made, hope is a guarantee. And the hope found in Christ is assurance rather than insurance.
And of course, there is a big difference between insurance and assurance. When you have car insurance, you are insuring yourself against something that you don't know that's going to happen. You hope that it won't, but it might, and so you need insurance.
But assurance is certainty. So when we have the assurance of Christ, we have assurance against those things which are certain.
[2:38] Death is a certainty, but you have the assurance of being raised with Christ. That's the assurance. It's not insurance because death is most definitely going to happen.

It's not a maybe, it's a definite. But you have the assurance that you will not go, be caught up in death's destruction, but you will raise and be raised with Christ.
In fact, you are in Christ already. And so we begin to see that the promise made produces in us hope because the hope is then a guarantee of everything that is assured, that God assures us throughout his scriptural text.
But that doesn't tell us why God made the promise. It tells us what the promise means, but it doesn't tell us why God made the promise. And it's important that we know why God made the promise, not just what the promise means to be made to you.
And this difference is the difference that I want us to focus on this morning, that you would be absolutely convinced as to why God made the promise. So in fact, why God would even keep such a promise.
[3:53] Now, because God is all-knowing, he knows the beginning from the end. This is how we know the moment that he has made the promise, he will keep the promise. Because there is nothing in the future that could then cause God to go, oh, now because this has happened, I'm no longer able to keep the promise.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 13:17:02

Okay? Because God knows the beginning from the end. He knows every nuance, every twist, every turn, every outcome of every thought, idea, or purpose, or action.
He knows it all, all the time. It means that the moment God makes the promise, there's never a point in the future where God's going to go, I didn't see that coming, and because of that, I'm no longer able to keep my promise.
That is a part of humanity. That's something that we would do because we don't know the future. But God doesn't do that because he's all-knowing. Now, that all-knowing God is the reason why the promises are made and the promises are kept.
Because God knows exactly when he makes the promise, what it's going to take to keep that promise. And as I said last week, when it comes to hope, it's the issues not hope, but rather who we're hoping in for what we're hoping for.
[5:08] In the same way a child, and I'll illustrate this again as I did last week, may hope for a certain item for Christmas, they may not realize unless it is pointed out to them.

And it's always advisable, I'll speak to you parents who have got young children, never to ask your children what they're hoping for for Christmas. The reason why it's important is not because you may not be able to get the present in the shop and then they're going to be disappointed, although that is a good reason.
But there is an even stronger reason than that, and that is that sometimes parents, a month before Christmas can fall on hard times. And suddenly what they promise them or what they're hoping for in September, the parents are no longer able to deliver in December.
They just don't have the ability to make good on the promise. You know, a large bill has come in, or they've had to go away, or they've lost their job, or a number of other things. And so it's never about what you're hoping for, but rather who you're hoping in.
Because the person you're hoping in is the only one who can deliver on the promise. But that still, as we said, as I'm saying this week, in light of last week, doesn't tell you why Christ made, God made the promise of Christ.
[6:28] In fact, if you look at it this way, why, with God knowing that Christ would be rejected by his own people, he would suffer and die on the cross, why would God, knowing all of that, because he's all-knowing, still make a promise of sending God the Son?

And of course the answer is, you probably don't even need to turn to this verse, John chapter 3, verse 16, that the reason God is able to make the promise is because God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
And so what motivates God to make you a promise is that firstly, he is love, and then he is loving, and that he sets his love upon you.
Now as I said last week, love must come with, or rather hope must come with, other attributes of God, and the same way love does.
God must be able to fulfill the promise. He cannot just promise you it and give you hope and love you and make the promise because he loves you, he must be able to make good on that promise.
[7:54] But it's important that you understand this morning, at least in part, if we don't get to go too deep, but we have to get deep enough to understand the difference between God who is love by nature and God who is loving towards us in Christ Jesus.

And the difference is important because it's only then do you actually begin to see that God doesn't have to set his love upon us, but he chooses to in the sense that we are his creation and he loves his creation.
And as I've said before, I think love, understanding the love of God is not easy. It's one of the most difficult things to understand, even though it is one of the best things to experience in life, if not the best to experience the very love of God in Christ Jesus.
It's not immediately obvious what that love looks like. So here this morning, as we consider this promise again in light of John chapter 3 verse 16, the reason God made the promise is because he so loved the world.
That's what motivates this promise towards us. But as I said, the love of God is not immediately obvious. It's not obvious to the Christian always, because even the Christian would wonder sometimes, given what they go through, why has this happened to me?
[9:23] Why has this not happened to me? Why do I have this? Why do I not have that? And then they question God's love for them, because God's love is not immediately obvious.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 13:17:02

It has to be understood. It's not just something to be experienced. So imagine your next door neighbor or a friend of yours who observes the suffering and conflict in the world.
Perhaps it's Ukraine, or perhaps it's something closer to home for them. And let's say, if we can put it in this context, that they're not just observing suffering and conflict from a distance.
But they're actually observing it in terms of experience. They have definite experience of it. Okay? They have a broken family home. Or they have, you know, a loved one that has just recently died. Or been knocked over in a car crash, car accident, or something like that. And so all of a sudden, the very suffering and conflict that is there in the world that you observe on the news is now at your front door.
[10:25] And so it's not obvious to this person when you hear on the second Sunday of Advent, and you say, let me talk to you about God who loves.

It's not obvious to that person that God is love, that God is loving. Because the question, which you're already anticipating that they would ask, which you're probably aware of anyway, is, well, if God does love, then why did he allow this to happen?
Which means that we have to understand God's love very differently than the absence or the presence of certain things happening or not happening. God's love is not immediately obvious to a person.
If God really loved me, then why didn't he stop this from happening? If God really loved me, then why didn't he allow me to have this? Why is there so much suffering if God loves the world?
Why is there so much conflict if God loves the world? And the point is simple that I'm making here is that love is not immediately obvious to people. And the love of God is specifically seen in Christ.
[11:45] Christ. And then, of course, in the promises that will be fulfilled in Christ. And so in order to understand the promise that God has made to us and the promise that God has made, or rather the outward working of the promise that God so loved the world that he gave his only son, in order for us to understand that, we have to understand two things.

Firstly, that God is love. And secondly, that God is loving. And what that actually means in the person of Christ Jesus. Because the same suffering, rejection, and conflict can be found in Christ Jesus.
God is love, and God is loving. God so loved the world that he sent his son to be rejected, to suffer, and to die. Okay? It's not immediately obvious, is it, that when you put it in those stark terms, in fact, if you go back into history with Anselm, and then Abelard, and then even up to the modern day history with Steve Chalk, these are the type of people who would say something like, it's not obvious that God is love.
Because look at the suffering of the cross. If God really punished Jesus on the cross, then he's nothing more than a cosmic child abuser. That's what someone who operates a very big church and a big charitable organization down in the South says.
He wrote a book on it called The Lost Message of Jesus. And the main theme of that book was that if you are saying that Christ was purposely rejected and suffered and died on the cross and received the punishment of God for our sin upon the cross, then what you're saying about God is that he is nothing more than a cosmic child abuser.
[13:43] The point is, again, that the love of God is not immediately obvious. It has to be understood because it can be so clearly misunderstood and misrepresented, even by those in the church, in church history that are full of them.

So let's not think that it's as easy as just talking about God's love without the difficulties that are there. Love is extremely difficult to receive, you know, not just easy to talk about.
In fact, one of my favorite phrases that I think sums up the difficulty of love is in a film called I, Daniel Blake, in which a girl falls on hard times.
I think I brought this to the church before. And she's got a young, I think it's a daughter or a son. And there's this older man who helps her out. And he doesn't want her to see her fall on hard times. And he would do anything for her. And he then goes looking for her. And she is taking herself off to a place where she can sell her body for money so that she can provide for herself and for her daughter.
[14:54] And he comes knocking on the door. And she knows immediately he's not there for that. And he knows he's not there for that. He's gone looking for her.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 13:17:02

And she turns around and says to him as she runs out of the place, don't show me any love. Don't show me any love. And I thought, that's it. That's nailed it.
The one line in all of history, in human sinful history, that nails the difficulty of receiving love. Because what love does is it causes you to come to terms with what you're receiving and why you're receiving it.
It's very difficult. So what I'm trying to stress this morning is that when God made this promise, and when it comes to us receiving and seeing and understanding this love, it's not obvious.
It's not immediately obvious without all of these difficulties that come. With it. But nonetheless, God is love. And God loves.
[16:02] So what does it mean? Well, let me start with this. When we say that God is love, we're saying that the very nature of God is love. And when we're saying that God loves, we're saying that even before creation existed, even before God created, love existed.

Because God is triune. That meant that within the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not only is the nature of God to love, but love is both given and received within the Trinity.
The Father loves the Son. The Son loves the Father. The Spirit is love. The Spirit loves. God loves. God is loved. Okay. So within the Trinity, you have both the very nature of love.
God is love. And then you have the very loving, loving and receiving love within the Trinity. And the reason why that's really, really important is because if God didn't set his love upon us, that wouldn't make God any less loving.
Which is often the common objection, isn't it? If God really loves, then he would do this. If God is really loving, then he would do this. And that's a failure to understand both the nature of God's love and the fact that God is triune.
[17:12] Because prior to creation, love existed, freely existed between the members of the Trinity. And it is the very nature of God. And so even if God doesn't extend his love to creation, he's still a loving God.

He's still a God who loves. And that's really important that you understand that. Really important. Because if you don't, you'll be tempted to believe that God can only be loving if he extends that love to me.
And if he doesn't extend that love to me, then he's not loving. He's not what he claims to be. And that's just not true. That, again, is a failure to understand just how great and how wonderful God is.
And so it may be tempting for the world to say that God doesn't love unless I can experience it. God isn't love unless he shows me that he loves me. That's just not true. Because even prior to anything being created, God is both love and God is loving within the Trinity.
And so the difficulty that comes with understanding God's love often falls right in this relationship between the connection of all things.
[18:32] That I can only seem to experience or know love if something is present or something is absent. In other words, if you loved me, you would do this. Okay?

If you loved me, you would say this. If you loved me, you wouldn't do that. And if you loved me, you wouldn't have said that. And so human love tends to fall into this category of the presence and absence of certain things.
And then we then define whether or not we are loved by another person by whether or not those things are true. And in much, there's so much truth to that.
That that is true. But the trouble is you cannot then relate that to God. Because that would be a bit like saying that I can't believe in the fatherhood of God because I never knew my own father.
Or I can't believe in the fatherhood of God or the love of the father because I never knew what it was like to have a father who loved me. Okay? I can't take what is humanly true on my personal experiential level and then translate that to God because God is father.
[19:43] It just wouldn't make any sense. Though I can fully understand why that type of transference is done. Because that's the way we do things.

That one relationship tends to affect all other relationships. But at the same time, there is a habit of, and we see this with many women who have had perhaps a number of divorces and a number of remarriages.
That why is it that a woman who marries and divorces a man for a particular, you know, because it broke down, marries the same type of man again? Why do these things tend to happen?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 13:17:02

And it happens because there are these defaults, things that humans just fall into. Because it's not immediately obvious what actually love is and what I need from other people.
So God, love towards us, cannot be simply understood in terms of all the good things happening to me and all the bad things being removed.
[20:50] But then I will know that God loves me. But only then can I truly understand what the love of God is. And the reason being is because if God is love, then everything that God does is an act of love.

Because God doesn't change. It also means that God's love for me is reliable as God himself. Because God is love. And yet, if I can raise the question before God, that if you love me, why not this, why not that?
The difficulty is not with God being inconsistent, or God's sometimes loving means sometimes not, but rather what I consider to mean what it means to be loved.
What does it mean to you to be loved by God? Does it mean that you should get everything that you want? Does it really mean that you should have every prayer answered?
Does it really mean that you should be kept from all forms of trials and sufferings and conflict? Does it mean that? Because if you think it does, then it's going to be very difficult for you to actually understand the love of God that is shown to you.
[22:15] Because it never comes that way. Completely. There are periods where you are kept from danger. There are periods where you are kept from conflict and suffering.

And that at other times, God is loving you through the very trial that he gives you. Through the very pain that he has given you.
God loves you through it. God loves you through it. God loves you through it. So we shouldn't categorize God's love as the presence or absence of certain things in the same way we do with human love.
But it would be fair to say that on a human level, even a child can accuse a parent of not being loving because the child has not got what they want.
Right? You remember the child that came home from school and her math book was just full of red crosses?
[23:16] And she says to her dad, Dad, I just don't think the teacher likes me. I don't think the teacher loves me. And the dad says, Well, why not? And she presents her math book to her parents and says, Look, I've got all these crosses.

And the dad, growing up in a different generation, looks to his daughter and says, Well, are they wrong? Are they wrong? Right? Because the idea is that if you love me, then you can't tell me off. If you love me, you can't tell me that I'm wrong. But true love, even on a human level, has the right to say, Stop. This is wrong.
Change a course of action or direction. True love will actually confront another individual. True love will actually look at another Christian who is wandering away from Christ into sin and say, Stop it now.
And turn around. And bring that person back as an act of love. True love would never celebrate another person's sinfulness as though they're finally set free from some kind of burden.
[24:33] And I've heard many Christians that say that, that some people have to be almost put out of their misery. And the only way they put themselves out of their misery is they're finding doing God's will so incredibly difficult, so challenging, so convicting, that the only time they get released from it is when they pursue their own sinful way.

And then suddenly, in a very ignorant way, they feel free. Free. And they consider that freeness to be loving and freeing.
But actually, Hebrews tells us that God, out of love, disciplines his children, which is a very uncomfortable thing to experience, to be disciplined.
And as I've said before, that God doesn't discipline the neighbor's children. He disciplines his own, because they're his own. It's a very demonstration of God's love.
Well, let me draw these things, these thoughts with conclusions then, or a few conclusions. The advent of Christ happens because the promise is made, but the promise is made because God so loved the world.
[25:50] The very motivation behind the promise of Genesis 3.15 is John chapter 3.16. That God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 13:17:02

And what the love of God means in your life is that it affects change. It's not just something you observe. It's not just something you experience, but it actually affects change in the human condition.
That you are changed by receiving God's love. That you are changed by God's love being shared with you. And how you are changed is that you receive the righteousness of Christ, and your sinfulness is dealt with on the cross.
And God's love affects change in the human condition. You are not the same person because you are loved by God. And you do not have the same future as you did because you are loved by God.
And so, when we love God back, we recognize that we're able to do so because he first loved us. It's not a reciprocal love in the sense that you did this for me. Now I must consider what my response should be.
[27:04] Now I must love you back. Now, that's not how God's love works. Human love tends to work on a reciprocal level. That as I observe your love for me, as I consider what you have done for me, then I'm going to love you back.

But biblical love doesn't work like that because Jesus tells us that we're to love our enemies. And what have our enemies ever done for us? Nothing. So the very motivation to love cannot be reciprocal, especially when we consider that we're to love our enemies.
How am I to reciprocate their love when an enemy would never show you any love? You see the point? And so the very love of God that enables us to love him back affects change in us.
It changes us. It doesn't allow, just causes us to consider and observe God's love for us. It actually causes a definite change within our life that we are now able to love God with.
We're able to love him back. And so my love for God is not so much a response to God's love, but rather a cause of God's love. Make sense?
[28:20] My response of loving God back has been caused by his love for me, not simply by me observing his love for me. It's actually a cause and effected change in my life.

And so with this, I'll close. Since love and God cannot be separated because God is love, a person can only know love if he knows God.
And a person will know love if he knows God. And a person will not know love if he does not know God in this foolish sense. There is a sense in which the whole world experiences the love of God ignorantly.
You know, the rain falls on the fields. They have food in their bellies. They have shelter. They have clothes. They experience God's care for them, but they do so ignorantly. They pay or give no attention to God or thankfulness that this has come from him.
But for us, who recognizes that love of God is not immediately obvious, but it does affect change in the human condition, hence why we're now able to love him back.
[29:34] We recognize that love is demonstrated by God in the giving of his son. That for God so loved the world that he gave his son. This is how you know that God has loved you.

And God gave his son knowing that he would be rejected and knowing that he would suffer and knowing that he would die. Knowing all of that.
Not obvious, is it, that that looks like the love of God. God's love of God. But that is God setting his love upon you and understanding what it will cost to love you.
Because it always costs someone something to love another person. And look at what it costs God to love you. It costs God the son rejection, suffering, and death.
Yes, he raised from the dead. But that doesn't diminish the rejection and the suffering that he had to go through. And of course, the death on the cross, which he laid down his life, of course.
[30:37] The point here is to recognize that the love of God is not obvious. But it is fundamentally clear in the person of Jesus Christ. It is absolutely clear in the person of Jesus Christ.

And in Christ, it is the place where we receive God's love. Love cannot be separated from God because God is love. And so, the love of God is not obvious to all people.
But it can be known to all people. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
Amen. And this is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And may this grace be with your spirit both now and forevermore.
Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-08 13:17:02