



Love

Kicking It Off

When you think about Christmas gatherings, what's one relationship or situation that feels complicated rather than warm or easy?

Read

Matthew 5:43-48

Summary

Christmas carries a lot of expectations. We imagine peaceful homes, restored relationships, and enjoying being altogether. But for many of us, the season actually exposes what's broken in our lives: unresolved conflict, people we avoid, resentment that never fully went away, or missing loved ones. Advent doesn't ignore that tension. It steps directly into it.

The heart of Advent love is this: God did not wait for the world to become lovable. He came near anyway. In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us to love our enemies, but that command isn't new or abstract. It's a description of what God has already done. At Christmas, God enters a hostile world. The incarnation is not God loving friends. It is God loving enemies.

The manger shows us a love that defies human expectations. We tend to love selectively. We stay safe. We love those who agree with us, treat us well, or feel manageable. God's love doesn't work that way. He gives before we ask, loves before we respond, and shines light into all darkness.

The Christmas story itself refuses to draw lines between people. And that story doesn't stop at the manger. The cradle casts a long shadow toward the cross, where Jesus will fully live out this love by praying for enemies, forgiving those who crucify Him, and giving Himself completely.

Advent love isn't sentimental or soft. It's costly. We aren't called to fix every relationship or force reconciliation, but to reflect the Father's heart. This Christmas, love may look like prayer instead of avoidance, restraint instead of retaliation, and kindness without guarantees. We celebrate Advent not because love is coming someday, but because in Jesus, love has already come near.

Discussion Questions

1. Was there anything from the sermon or the passage that stuck out to you?
2. The sermon described Christmas as God loving His enemies, not His friends. How does that idea change the way you see the incarnation?
3. Where do you see the contrast between “safe” human love and the risky, costly love God shows in Jesus?
4. Jesus says God sends His light on both the righteous and the unrighteous. What is hard about believing that God’s love isn’t earned or limited?
5. The Christmas story includes people we wouldn’t naturally group together. Who do you find it hardest to imagine included in God’s love and why?
6. The sermon emphasized reflection, not fixing. What would it look like for you to reflect God’s love this season without trying to control the outcome?

Sermon Notes

Matthew 5:43-48 ESV

Love Your Enemies

*43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that
you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil
and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those
who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47
And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even
the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is
perfect.*

Outline

Advent LOVE

“Love Has Come Near”

Introduction: Why Love Feels Complicated at Christmas

Advent is about waiting, but it's also about **expectation**.

We expect Christmas to be warm:

- Peaceful families
- Reconciled relationships
- Being joyful together

But for many, Christmas highlights:

- Broken relationships
- Resentment
- People we avoid or can't forgive
- Loss of loved ones

And into that reality, Jesus says:

“Love your enemies.”

That doesn't sound like a sentimental Christmas message until we realize **that's exactly what God did at Christmas**.

Big Idea

At Christmas, God did not wait for the world to become lovable. He came near in love, even to His enemies.

Point 1: Christmas reveals a love that defies human expectations

5:43 “You have heard that it was said...” Leviticus 19:18

Human love during the holidays often stays **safe**:

- We love our own
- We avoid the complicated ones

But Advent reminds us:

God’s love doesn’t wait for clean hearts, fixed families, or good behavior.

Point 2: Christmas Is God Loving Us First

5:44: “But I say to you, love your enemies...”

Jesus doesn’t introduce a new idea in Matthew 5. He explains what God has **already done**.

At Christmas:

- God enters a broken world
- Christ is born under Roman oppression
- The Savior arrives among sinners, not saints

The incarnation is not God loving friends.

It is God loving **enemies**.

“While we were still sinners... Christ came.” Romans 5:8-10

Point 3: Christmas is God sending Light into darkness.

5:45 “He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good...”

This is Advent hope:

God sends light into darkness; *all* darkness.

The birth of Jesus proves:

- Grace is not earned
- Love is not rationed
- God does not wait for worthiness

The manger shows us what Matthew 5 teaches:

God gives before we ask.

God loves before we respond.

Point 4: Christmas connects the line from God to us (Emmanuel)

5:48 “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

In Advent terms:

Perfect love is **complete love** and a love that leaves no one outside.

Jesus is born to:

- Shepherds (outsiders)
- Magi (foreigners)
- Roman Soldiers and King Herod

The Christmas story doesn't draw lines.

Gospel: The Cross Is Cast in the Shadow of the Manger

The baby in the manger grows into the man on the cross.

- He will pray for His enemies
- He will forgive those who kill Him
- He will live out Matthew 5 completely

Advent love is not soft; it's **costly**.

The cradle points forward to the cross.

Application: Advent Love in Real Life

This season, love may look like:

- Praying for someone you avoid at family gatherings
- Choosing restraint instead of retaliation
- Offering kindness without expecting reconciliation to be instant

You don't have to fix everything.

Rather, You are called to **reflect the Father**.

Conclusion: Love Has Come Near

At Christmas, God doesn't shout love from heaven.

He **steps into it**.

Jesus comes near to enemies.

Jesus brings light to darkness.

Jesus shows us what love really looks like.

This Advent, we don't just celebrate that love is coming.

Love has come.