

Advent Love

We have been talking about Advent over these past podcasts. Today, we will talk about the final virtue, love. We will start our time together by reading from John, Chapter 3.

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10 “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^[1] 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.”

John Testifies Again About Jesus

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. 24 (This was before John was put in prison.) 25 An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. 26 They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”

27 To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. 28 You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ 29 The bride belongs to the

bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less."

³¹ The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. ³³ Whoever has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Eternal life. Our forever gift of God's love. Because of Jesus, you and I are now, in this moment, eternal beings with a Home waiting. We are wrapped in eternity in Him. This should fill our hearts with hope, peace, joy and love.

On this, the last Sunday of Advent, churches everywhere will light the fourth candle as a symbol of Advent love. Believers reflect on the scriptures from the Old and New Testaments about Jesus' birth, death and coming resurrection and about the depth of God's love for us. God's love is the foundation for the whole story of the Bible: creation, the fall, redemption, and the coming process of complete restoration. At Christmastime, we believe that God's greatest gift of love was Jesus, the Savior of the world.

We need Christ and Christ's love to share the Good News of salvation throughout the earth. We cannot be Christians without Christ and without love. Christ steps down into darkness to light the world. Because of Him, we can be a light unto others, showing them the true meaning of Christmas. This final week of Advent helps us to reflect on the magnitude of love that was made manifest in Jesus.

Love moved the heart of our heavenly Father to act on behalf of His children. He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to rescue us in love and by great sacrifice. Great love can be talked about, deep passionate love can be expressed verbally or even written down, but love expressed in action proves that it exists. Romans 5:8 says, "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." We know God loves us because of the cross.

God hasn't called all of us to lay down our lives as Christ did in His death, but He has called all of us to lay down our lives daily in service and love, which requires a different kind of death—death to our selfish nature. Look for those around you who need love this Christmas season.

Let's pray...

Father God,

Thank You for loving us so much that You gave Your Son for us, You loved us even before we loved You. Thank You for inviting us into your family. Lord Jesus, You made Your dwelling among us. You set aside all the glory and splendor of heaven and chose the most humble way to come to this earth. Beneath the stars, surrounded by the hosts of heaven, Love came to earth. You are the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Messiah, Ruler of All, You came as a lamb. You walked this earth in love for 33 years. You knew what You would face. You loved us anyway and allowed Yourself to be placed on that cross. Sin blocked us from God and You removed that barrier for us. In the future, You will return and restore all in us and all in the world that is broken. You will restore all of creation.

Please help us love one another with the love You have given to us. Help us to see every person the same way that You see them and love them the way You love them, even when they do not love us back. Father, put someone on our hearts who we can love through an act of kindness. Small acts of kindness go a long, long way.

This final week of Advent, please fill our hearts and minds with the truth. Thank You for loving us enough, to send Your Son.

In His precious name, we pray.

Amen