

The Incarnation of Love

I. Introduction

A. Advent Themes

1. Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

II. The Incarnation of Love

A. Love for the Unlikely (Luke 2:1-5)

1. The Christmas narrative unfolds in an unexpected setting—Bethlehem. In the ordinary lives of Mary and Joseph, God chose unlikely vessels to bear His extraordinary gift of love. Mary, a young, humble woman, and Joseph, a carpenter, were seemingly ordinary by societal standards. Yet, God's love bypassed the powerful and prestigious, selecting an unlikely couple to bring forth the Savior of the world.
2. This reveals to us that God's love is not restricted by human expectations. God's love is given to the unlikely, unassuming, and underserving—it is given to you and I during this Advent season. As we reflect on the unlikely recipients of God's love in the Christmas story, take heart—no one is beyond the reach of God's grace and love.

B. Love in Unexpected Ways (Luke 2:6-7)

1. In the unassuming town of Bethlehem, God's love was revealed in an unexpected manner. The King of kings, wrapped in swaddling cloths, was laid in a humble manger. The method of delivery was not a grand palace or a royal procession, but a stable—a place that defied worldly expectations. God's love defies our human logic, and His ways often confound our understanding.
2. God chose the simplicity of Bethlehem and the unassuming arrival of a baby to unveil His boundless love. In the humble cries of an infant, God's grand design was quietly set into motion. This unexpected manifestation of love challenges our preconceived notions, reminding us that God often reveals His greatest gifts in the most unexpected ways. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem underscores the divine irony of God's love, choosing the humblest of beginnings to usher in salvation for all.

3. As we contemplate the unexpected ways God's love manifests, let us open our hearts to the possibility that God's love may come to us in ways we least expect. God's surprises are often wrapped in humility and simplicity, reminding us that His love is not confined to the extravagant, but is found in the ordinary moments of life.

C. Love as the Gift of Himself (John 3:16)

1. The pinnacle of God's love is revealed in the ultimate gift—Himself. John 3:16 encapsulates this profound truth: "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." God's love transcends material gifts; it is the gift of His very self, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.
2. This self-giving love is the heart of the Christmas story. The Almighty Creator humbly entered His creation, dwelling among us to reconcile and redeem.
3. Colossians 2:9, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily..."
 - a) "God takes on flesh. God lies in a manger. God plays with other children. God eats round the table. God sweats on the roadside. God sleeps in the boat. God shares our human weakness. God experiences our temptations."¹
 - b) "...In the conception and birth of Jesus Christ, God took on humanity in bodily fashion. God raised his love for human beings above every reproach of falsehood and doubt and uncertainty by himself entering into the life of human beings as a human being, by bodily taking upon himself and bearing the nature, essence, guilt, and suffering of human beings. Out of love for human beings, God becomes a human being."²
4. As we receive the gift of God's love this Advent season, let us be awestruck by the magnitude of His self-sacrifice. The manger foreshadows the cross, where God's love reaches its zenith as Christ offers Himself for our salvation.

¹ Tim Chester, *The One True Light* (United Kingdom: The Good Book Company, 2015), 58.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Jana Riess, *God Is in the Manger : Reflections on Advent and Christmas*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 50.

5. Here is the Gospel. “The God who is love draws near to me, a sinful, mere mortal, to draw me near to himself, in order to draw me within the circle of Lover, Beloved, and Love itself.”³

III. Closing Thoughts

- A. As our Advent journey comes to an end, may we embrace the truth that God's gift of love is not confined to the likely or the expected. It is given to the unlikely, in unexpected ways, and ultimately as the gift of Himself. Let this season be a time of divine surprises, where we open our hearts to the unexpected ways God's love may manifest in our lives. As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, may the revelation of God's love inspire us to share this divine gift with others, making the world brighter with the love that transcends all expectations. Amen.

³ Darrell W. Johnson, *Experiencing the Trinity* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2002), 63.

Bibliography

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, and Jana Riess. *God Is in the Manger : Reflections on Advent and Christmas*. 1st ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Chester, Tim. *The One True Light*. United Kingdom: The Good Book Company, 2015.

Johnson, Darrell W. *Experiencing the Trinity*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2002.