



Sermon: The Gift of Love

Scripture: John 3:16–17; 1 John 4:9–12; Matthew 1:18–25;
Titus 3:4-5; Matthew 22:37–39

Summary: At Christmas each year, we give gifts to those we love. Our annual gift giving serves as a reminder of the greatest love gift ever given. The most amazing gift ever received. The gift of God himself TO US, born in a stable. Born TO US in a little town called Bethlehem.

God did not merely send help from heaven—**He came Himself**. Scripture reveals that love is not defined by human affection or effort, but by divine action. In John 3, we see that God's love moved Him to give His one and only Son so that sinners then and now, like you and me, might be saved from the death penalty. Not condemned to die like a thief on a cross but redeemed by the life blood of the innocent and saved from death to live forever. In 1 John 4, we learn that real love begins with God's initiative, is revealed through the incarnation, and is fulfilled through the sacrifice of Jesus. Advent invites us to behold incarnate love—God drawing near in Christ—and to respond by receiving His love and regifting it to others.

Spotlight: The gift of Jesus is the greatest expression of God's love for the world. *God didn't send an answer—He came Himself.*

I. Love's Motivation - *God Loved the World* (John 3:16–17).

God's love did not begin with human worthiness but with divine compassion. This is *how* God loved: He **gave**. Love moved God outward toward a broken world, not inward toward comfort.

- God's love is the source of salvation, not the response to human effort.
- Love originates in God's character (cf. 1 John 4:8).
- Jesus did not come to condemn a world already condemned, but to rescue it.

If God loved us while we were lost, we cannot withhold love from those still lost.

The love of God is the great reason of the gift of Christ.

II. Love's Revelation - *God Sent His Son* (1 John 4:9–10).

Love is not an abstract idea—it is revealed action. God made His love **visible** by sending His Son as the **atonement sacrifice**, fully satisfying God's righteous judgment against sin.

- Love is defined by the cross, not by culture.
- We did not love God first—He loved us first.
- Substitutionary atonement is love in action.

When love costs you something, you're beginning to love like God loves.

"Love must give; it cannot do otherwise than give." C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Sermon No. 1107, "Love's Logic" (Romans 5:8)

"He gave all that He had; He reserved nothing." C. H. Spurgeon, Sermon "Christ's Poverty, Our Riches" (2 Corinthians 8:9)

III. Love's Incarnation - *God Came Near* - Matthew 1:18–23

Love did not shout from heaven—it **stepped into human flesh**. *Immanuel* ("God with us") means God entered our weakness, our suffering, our story. The incarnation is not a sentimental scene; it is a **mission of mercy**.

- God did not love us from a distance.
- The eternal Son took on humanity without ceasing to be God.
- Because Jesus came near, He understands our pain.

Since God came near to us, we must be willing to draw near to others.

"The incarnation was the most astounding act of humility in the history of the universe." John Piper (2004). *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*. Crossway Books.

IV. Love's Salvation - *God Saves Sinners* - Titus 3:4–5

Salvation flows from divine kindness, not human righteousness. Paul emphasizes **mercy**, not merit. The phrase "*washing of rebirth*" points to spiritual regeneration—God makes dead hearts alive.

- Salvation is God's work from beginning to end.
- We are saved *not by works* but by grace through faith.
- Justification and regeneration flow from love.

Gratitude, not guilt, should fuel obedience.

Quote attributed to *Vernon McGee*: "Grace is not God overlooking sin—it is God dealing with sin."

V. Love's Application - *Love God & Love One Another* - Matthew 22:37–39

Love received must become love reflected. Jesus binds love for God and love for others together—one cannot exist authentically without the other. Vertical love produces horizontal obedience.

- Love is the mark of genuine faith.
- Organized and institutional church without love is empty religion.
- The local church is to be a living witness/testimony of God's love.

Who will experience God's love through me today?

1 John 4:19: "We love each other because He loved us first."

God's love begins in His heart, is revealed in His Son, draws near through the incarnation, saves by grace, and is displayed through His people.

Life Application Questions:

I. Love's Motivation — *God Loved the World* - John 3:16–17

1. When you think about God's love, do you see it as something you must earn or something you have received by grace?
2. How does knowing that Jesus came to save—not condemn—change the way you see God's love for you? Share the God's love through the Gospel with others?
3. What would it look like this week to reflect God's initiating love rather than waiting for others to change first?

II. Love's Revelation — *God Sent His Son* - 1 John 4:9–10

1. Has the cross personally reshaped your understanding of what real love looks like? In what ways?
2. Are you ever tempted to redefine love apart from sacrifice, truth, or obedience? How do you respond most often? What is the best response?
3. How can your words and actions more clearly reveal Christ's love to those around you? Spouse? Children? Co-workers? Neighbors? Strangers?

III. Love's Incarnation — *God Came Near* - Matthew 1:18–23

1. Where in your life do you need to be reminded that God is *with you*, not far away?
2. Does the truth of Immanuel: God with us, bring comfort or courage in a current struggle or uncertainty? If not, ask Jesus to bring peace and joy to your life!
3. What practical steps can you take this week to reflect the nearness of Christ to someone who feels alone drawing closer to them?

IV. Love's Salvation — *God Saves Sinners* - Titus 3:4–5

1. Are you resting in God's mercy, or are you still trying to prove yourself through effort or performance?
2. Does remembering that you are saved by grace—not works—shape your humility in worship toward God and in your actions toward others? If not, why not?
3. How can your testimony of grace point someone else to the saving kindness of God?

V. Love's Application — *We Love God & We Love One Another* - Matthew 22:37–39

1. How would your daily priorities change if loving God truly came first in every decision?
2. Is there any relationship where love has grown cold, requiring repentance, forgiveness, or renewed effort?
3. What are some specific ways our church can more clearly demonstrate Christ's love to our coastal community through unity and service?