

But not only do we have salvation, forgiveness of sin and eternal life, we have the Father's love.

If salvation, heaven, and eternal life are our gifts, who is the giver?

While there is joy in what we receive, we can't stop there. The greater joy for us is in the relationship we have with God our Father, the giver of the gifts, the one who is love. Don't try to squeeze love out of the gift, experience love from the gift giver Himself.

3. Power of Love

2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. - Ephesians 5:2 NLT

When King Herod heard a new king had been born, he ordered all the young boys of Israel killed to protect his own power. But the power of God's love was demonstrated by Jesus in laying down his own life.

How did Jesus' sacrifice display power rather than weakness? Why was God pleased by Jesus' sacrifice? How have you seen the power of God's love in your life?

WRAP-UP

God is love and He loves us unconditionally. We have all heard John 3:16 and we know that it was because of God's love that Jesus came to earth to die in our place and offer us eternal life as children of God. There is nothing that can separate us from God's love. It is more powerful than sin and death. And it began in a manger.

MEMORY VERSE

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. 10 This is real love--not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. - 1 John 4:9-10 NLT

Challenge – We pray that you will enjoy the hope, peace, joy and love of God this Christmas and throughout the New Year!

Love

Welcome to Our World #4
Christmas Eve 2023

INTRODUCTION

The fourth and final week of Advent invites us to focus on love. It is easy to relate love to Christmas because our definition of love encompasses so much. We love the lights, the food, the gifts, the family gatherings (well, we want to love the family gatherings). But there is a deeper truer expression of love that was demonstrated at Christmas when God came to earth in the form of a baby in the manger. This week let's set aside our limited version of Christmas love and reflect on the love God offered us in a Bethlehem manger.

Ice Breaker

What is one way you've expressed your love to others this Christmas? Is there something unique that others have done to express their love to you?

Key Passage

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. 10 This is real love--not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. - 1 John 4:9-10 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Love?

If we asked people to list what they love most they might include everything from tacos to spouses.

If you made a list of things you love, what would you include?

We define the word love broadly. Our versions of love are limited at best and are often deeply flawed. We may view love as transactional: “when you love me then I’ll love you”, or conditional: “I’ll love you under the right circumstances.” This view may have been reinforced in your family or by prevailing cultural norms. But it is not the biblical view of God’s love.

How have our flawed definitions of love shaped our expectations of God’s love for us?

2. Love Revealed

*9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. 10 This is real love--not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.
- 1 John 4:9-10 NLT*

When we read the key verse above it should cause us to pause and take notice. The love of God is a profound mystery. It defies logic. Why would the Creator of the Cosmos, constrain Himself and take on life as a man, and then sacrifice His life? How can mankind possibly be that valuable to Him?

God demonstrated His love through His sacrifice. Why would God do that (v.9)? Spend a moment in prayer as you reflect on this truth.

16 We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. - 1 John 4:16 NLT

25 "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. 26 I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them." - John 17:25-26 NLT

Love is not just something God does, it is something He is. In answer to the question “What is love?” we see that “God is love.” God loves us because at His essence, God is the embodiment of love.

How has God, who is love, been revealed to us according to John 17:26? How does this passage reveal the relationship between knowing God and knowing love?

When Jesus entered our world, we beheld God incarnate, and at the same time we saw what love really looks like.

28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" 29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 30 "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ... 35 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ... 47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! 48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. - Luke 1:28-31, 35, 47-48 NLT

When Mary was told that she would give birth to the Messiah, we see the Holy Trinity at work to reveal God’s love.

Where do we see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in this passage? As a young woman Mary would have no status in her culture. Yet God chose her as a key part in the plan to reveal His love to the world. In an instant God’s love touched and changed the trajectory of Mary’s life. What hope does that offer to us today?

9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They (the shepherds) were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior--yes, the Messiah, the Lord--has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others--the armies of heaven--praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." - Luke 2:9-14 NLT

The radical, audacious love of God came to the outcast and marginalized shepherds. “Unto YOU is born a Savior!” This was the best Christmas gift ever given. We have a savior.