

HOCL – LOVE (Advent – December 11, 2012)

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I want to talk to you about the topic of Love and we want to reflect on it through the lens of the Advent and Christmas Season. The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. And so, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, and the revelation of God in Christ in which all of creation might be reconciled to Him. Reconciliation is when we take a step of faith and enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ and invite Him into our life to be our Lord and Savior. The Christmas Story that is familiar to most of us out of Luke 2 tells us that, "Today, in the town of David, a SAVIOR has been born to you!"

John 3:16 captures the essence of Advent and the Christmas Story when we read, "For God so loved the world, that He GAVE US His only Son, that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life!"

And it's because of this love that God expressed to us (by sending His son) that we celebrate this Season of Advent and Christmas!

In our notes today, I want to share out of 1 John 4:7-21 and if you would like to follow along with me, you can turn there in your bible or you can find 1 John 4 on page _____ in the Bible in your row and I want to talk to you about this idea of Love:

The message is a bit different today - we'll be reading through the entire passage, but I will stop and interject some commentary at each point

1 John 4:7-21 ~ "Dear friends, let us love one another, for

1. Love comes from God vs. 7a

- It does not come from us. You and I could be the most loving people in the world but we do not have the capacity to create LOVE.
- The love that I'm talking about is beyond our understanding and comprehension. It's infinite, it's everlasting, it's a mystery!!

III – Hymn - There's an old hymn that speaks of this Love. the words were written by Frederick Lehman, a man who before he died had come to know God's infinite love.....

"The love of God is greater far, Than tongue or pen can ever tell. It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell. The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave his son to win: his erring child he reconciled, and pardoned from his sin. Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky. O love of God, how rich and pure How measureless and strong. It shall for evermore endure...."

The Love of God during this Advent Season can only come from God!!

2. Everyone who loves has been born of and knows God. Whoever Does not love, does not Know God. vs. 7b & 8a

Let me pull out a few things that this verse is telling us.....

- a. **The phrase, ““Everyone who loves”** refers to all genuine Christians, who give evidence of that by their love for one another. John 13:35 tells us that “all men will know we are Christians (Christ’s disciples), if we love one another.”
- b. **It also tells us that those who are genuine Christians have been born of or have been Spiritually Fathered by God and that makes us God’s children.** And we can find in [1 John 3:23](#) that the command to show love to fellow Christians is preceded by our belief in Jesus Christ, so that love is the effect (the result or the outcome) rather than the cause (the root or the reason) of the spiritual birth spoken of here in this passage.
- c. **It’s telling us that unless we are born of the Spirit, we cannot show or express True Love.** (everyone who loves, has been born of God)
- d. **It’s telling us that if we do not love, We do not know God.** The person who does not love is not really a genuine believer, no matter what he or she might claim. A failure to love others demonstrates that we are not genuine Christians. It’s interesting to note here that throughout the entire book of 1 John, the only specific moral fault the author ever charges his opponents with in the letter is failure to show love for fellow Christians when they are in need. [1 John 3:17](#) - ¹⁷ “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”
- e. **And lastly, this passage is telling us there is a difference between knowing about God and KNOWING GOD.** You might be familiar with Jesus’ words at John 17:3. It is just before he is arrested and he is praying for himself, and for the disciples, and all the other believers, and he prays to God and says, **“This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”** (NRSV) The term “know” in the Scriptures often has a sense beyond the basic meaning of simply having intellectual knowledge of something or someone. To truly KNOW GOD, means that we have a deep, intimate, personal relationship with Him. One commentator says that, “To “know God” is to have a vital relationship with him, one characterized by faithfulness, and rooted in love, confidence, and profound, enduring regard. To “know God” in all one’s ways is to act in a manner that enables that relationship, that solidifies it, that promotes its welfare and shows that one cherishes it above all else. It is to rely on God, to trust the rightness of his ways and seek to be guided by them in every circumstance. To know God” pleases God.

Let me ask you a question today. Do you know about God....do you have intellectual knowledge about God or do you know God....do you have a deep, personal relationship with Him?

3. God is LOVE vs. 8b

Special Note at the bottom of your notes today: Hebrew word for Love: אהבה = “ah-ha-VAH” or “Hesed” – the root meaning is to “Give” and is most often used in relationship to hierarchy.....God to us, not us toward God. Love is ALWAYS giving.

There's not one attribute of God is any more important than any other, and all His attributes are expressed in conjunction with each other and they all have their root in LOVE. Love is the most powerful motivating force in all of God's being. It deeply affects everything else God is and all that He does. We can't possibly have enough time today to talk about the subject of God's love, but let me quickly give to you some characteristics of God's love.

God's Love Is Self-Giving – Love will always involve action. It is expressed in the giving of oneself for the good of another. Love is not passive.

God's Love Is Sacrificial - Not only does God's love motivate Him to give, but it motivates Him to give when it costs Him dearly. God's giving of His Son involved more than merely allowing Him to leave Heaven's glory and enter earth's history. It meant allowing Him to die in our place and pay the awful debt of our sins.

God's Love Is Unconditional - One of the most amazing things about God's love is that it is extended to us when we do not deserve it and continues to be firm and strong even when we do not respond to it. Friends, you might be sitting here today and you've never responded to the love of God, but guess what? He loves you anyway. To do anything less would contradict who He is.

God's Love Is Eternal – “The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying, I have loved you with an everlasting love” ([Jeremiah 31:3](#)).

This everlasting love reaches into eternity past. He knew us and loved us before He made us, when we were but a thought in His mind. And He will love us for eternity to come! Paul assured us in Romans 8:39 that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God. The love of an eternal God must be an eternal love.

God's Love Is Holy - Everything God does is done in the totality of His being, so His love must always be consistent with His other attributes. Since God is holy, then His love must be a holy love that encourages holiness in those who are loved.

God's Love Is Comforting - When we grasp the reality of God's love, we will no longer seek out security in jobs, bank accounts, investments, houses, husbands, wives, friends, or health. We will rest in the Lord, free from all fear, secure in the assurance that He is going to provide all that we need and protect us from everything that will not be for our good.

God's Love is Life-Changing - Most of us long to be loving people, able to give love to our spouses, our children, our fellow believers, our unsaved acquaintances, and, most of all, to the Lord Himself. But we find it so difficult. It is nearly impossible for us to love others unless we are genuinely convinced that we ourselves are loved. The reason many people are tough, callused, insensitive, and unloving is because they are not convinced they are really loved. A world-renowned theologian was asked by a student what he considered to be the most significant theological truth he ever learned. His answer was, “Jesus loves me. This I know; for the Bible tells me so.” Friends, you have to Believe that today! God loves you!

Let me put #4 and #5 together for you today.....

4. This is how **God showed His love among us**: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and

5. He sent his Son as an Atoning sacrifice for our SINS vs. 10

The breakdown of these 2 verses is this.....God sent his son, Jesus, to this earth to live and then to die a horrible death to cover or to forgive us of our sins...this is what an atoning sacrifice is....it's a covering or a forgiving of sins. The sins that are represented are sins of our past, present, and future!!! It is only from God's merciful LOVE for us (the love that we do not deserve) and his Atoning sacrifice he made for us, that we have the opportunity to be restored and reconciled to Him! IF God had not sent his Son to us, He would have denied His own characteristic of LOVE, and there would be no way for you and I to get to heaven. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice and God showed his love AMONG ALLLLLLLLLLL of US by sending Christ to us!!

Has anyone in your lifetime ever showed you as much love as God has shown you? It's impossible. No one can ever love you as much as God has loved you!! Your mother, your spouse, your kids.....none of them can ever express the amount of love that God has for you and I.

And friends, I don't know what this part of the passage does for you today, but my hope is that when you get your mind and heart around the idea that someone gave up his life for you and wiped away ALL your sins, and is providing you with an opportunity to be reconciled with him and to meet with Him in heaven one day, that it just might be a moment in your life where you experience a transformational work of the Holy Spirit and step into a relationship with Christ for the very first time. Or, maybe today you will come to a point of fully surrendering to His will and to His ways and live the rest of your life as a living sacrifice that will only bring glory and honor to God.

#6, 7, and 8 all go together for us.....

6. Dear friends, since God so Loved us, we are to love one another. No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. vs. 11 & 12

7. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. **Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in Him.** vs. 15 & 16

8. In this way, **Love is made complete among us** so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement because in this world, we are like him. vs. 17

The fullness of God's love comes together (or is made complete) when 3 things happen. 1. When God loves us. 2. When we love one another, and 3. When He is living in us. Verses 13 and 14 build on this thought of God living in us when it says "we know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his son to be the savior of the world." This whole idea of Love is very much an experiential reality for each one of us. Yes, it requires faith in things that are not seen. But it also requires us to experience God living in us through His Spirit!!! And how do we know that God is living in us? Well, a good indicator is when we see the Fruit of the

Spirit operating in our lives. “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (Galatians 5). Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Keeping in step with the Spirit of God is evidence of us loving God, loving one another, and His living in us!!!

Q; How are we doing in keeping in step with the Spirit? If we’re not keeping in step with the spirit, it will be difficult to love god and to love others.

9. There is no fear in love. But Perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” vs 18. The Bible mentions two specific types of fear. The first type is beneficial and is to be encouraged. The second type is a detriment and is to be overcome. The first type of fear is fear of the Lord. This type of fear does not necessarily mean to be afraid of something. Rather, it is a reverential awe of God; a reverence for His power and glory. It is a proper respect for His wrath and anger. In other words, the fear of the Lord is a total acknowledgement of all that God is, which comes through knowing Him and His attributes.

The second type of fear mentioned in the Bible is not beneficial at all. This is the “spirit of fear” mentioned in [2 Timothy 1:7](#): “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (NKJV). Friends, this could be a life changing moment for you and for me today. A spirit of fearfulness and timidity does not come from God. You do not have to fear about your family, your friends, your finances, or your future!!! When you fear, it is only coming from satan himself and you and I have the POWER to come against satan and his schemes in the name of Jesus!! The last part of this verse is powerful – the one who fears is NOT made perfect in LOVE.

Let me wrap it up here today and read the remaining verses for us:

10. We love because He first loved us. (vs. 19-20) If anyone says, I love God, yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. “

11. And he has given us this command, ‘Whoever loves God, MUST also love others. vs. 21

Friends, Ephesians 5:1-2 and Romans 12:10 remind us today that we are to “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.... and we are to let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for **he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law**....all the commandments are summed up in this one rule.....love your neighbor as yourself.

During this Advent and Christmas Season, I want to encourage you to Love. Love God first and foremost. Love him with every part of your being. And then love your neighbor as yourself.

Prayer