

Love, The Heart of Christmas

Love is the defining theme of the Christmas story. It is the reason for Christ's coming and the foundation of our faith. Discover how God's love transforms our lives, calls us into relationship, and empowers us to reflect His love to the world.

Introduction

Throughout Advent, we've journeyed through Hope, Peace, and Joy—each one leading us closer to the heart of Christmas. As we light the final Advent candle, we focus on Love, the ultimate expression of God's character revealed in the birth of Jesus.

The Gospel of John begins with this profound truth found in John 3:16-17, *"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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* Love is not just a theme of Advent, it is the heartbeat of the Gospel.

This Advent season, as we reflect on the birth of Jesus, we recognize that it is God's love that compels everything; His decision to send His Son into the world, the way He interacts with us, and how He calls us to love others. Today, we will explore how God's love is revealed through Christ, how it transforms us, and how it calls us to love others in a way that mirrors His own sacrificial love.

God's Love Revealed in Christ

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 5:8:

Romans 5:8

(8) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The story of Christmas begins in a humble stable but points to the ultimate expression of love at the cross. In sending Jesus, God bridged the gap between Himself and humanity, providing a way for us to experience His love fully.

Advent reminds us that God's love is not abstract or distant; it is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. From the moment He was born in Bethlehem, God's love became tangible, accessible, and personal. When Jesus entered the world, He brought love into the very fabric of humanity. The angels' announcement to the shepherds, *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people"* found in Luke 2:10 was the first proclamation of God's deep love for the world, a love that reaches everyone, regardless of their status or circumstance.

This love is both a gift and a calling. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, we're reminded that God's love isn't just for us to receive; it is something we are to share with others. God's love in Christ is the ultimate demonstration of what love looks like, and as we follow Him, we are called to reflect that same love in our relationships with others.

This week, spend time reflecting on the gift of Christ's love. Meditate on Romans 5:8 and consider the depth of God's love for you. Ask God to help you see His love more clearly and to cultivate a heart that



freely gives His love to those around you. Seek out moments to show God's love in tangible ways this Advent season; whether it is through an encouraging word, a gesture of kindness, or simply being present for someone in need.

God's Love Transforms Us

We learn in 1 John 4:19:

1 John 4:19

(19) We love because he first loved us.

God's love doesn't just comfort us; it transforms us. When we encounter His love, we are changed. Just as the birth of Jesus was a transformative event for the world, His love continues to transform us from the inside out.

During Advent, we remember that God sent His Son not only to save us but to renew us. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" This transformation begins with our understanding of God's love. It frees us from fear, guilt, and shame and enables us to walk in the newness of life.

Consider the example of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a tax collector, an outcast in his community, until he encountered Jesus. Jesus' love didn't just stop at words, it reached deep into Zacchaeus' heart, transforming him into a new person. Zacchaeus immediately responded to that love by repenting and making restitution, giving half of his wealth to the poor and restoring what he had taken. This transformation was the result of an encounter with Christ's love.

Take time this week to examine areas of your life where you may still be holding onto past hurts, guilt, or fears. Invite God's transforming love to penetrate those areas. Pray for the grace to forgive, release, and receive the full renewal that Christ offers. Allow His love to transform your thoughts, actions, and attitudes, so you can live more fully in the freedom He brings.

God's Love Calls Us to Love Others

Jesus teaches us in John 13:34:

John 13:34

(34) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."

The Christmas story is about more than just receiving God's love; it is about responding to that love by loving others. Jesus came into the world not only to be a Savior but also to show us how to love. As we celebrate His birth, we are reminded that His life and ministry were a constant reflection of God's love in action. Jesus loved the unlovable, reached out to the marginalized, and forgave the unforgivable. His love was sacrificial, unconditional, and radically inclusive.

Advent invites us to reflect on how we, too, are called to love like Jesus. The Magi, though from a distant land, traveled great distances to honor Jesus with their gifts. Their act of love was sacrificial; giving up time, resources, and comfort to come and worship the King. The shepherds, too, responded with love,



spreading the good news of Christ's birth wherever they went. They didn't keep this joy to themselves, they shared it.

As we approach Christmas, ask yourself: How can you express God's love to those around you? This week, reach out to someone who may need to experience the love of Christ. It could be a family member, a neighbor, or even someone who feels lonely during the holidays. Look for ways to show practical love, perhaps through a thoughtful gift, a heartfelt message, or a random act of kindness. Let your love reflect the love of Christ this Advent season.

Conclusion

Love is the culmination of Advent, the thread that ties Hope, Peace, and Joy together. It is the reason for Christ's coming, the ultimate gift of God's grace to humanity. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we carry His love into our homes, our communities, and the world. May we be vessels of His love, extending it to others in ways that reflect His sacrificial, unconditional heart.

On behalf of the Church Council of Cell Life Church International, Kelly and I wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas. May the love of God fill your hearts and homes with peace, joy, and hope this holiday season.

