

Advent pt 4- Love

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Advent / John 3:16–21, Philippians 2:5-11, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

As we get closer to Jesus' arrival I thought it would be good for us to hear His thoughts on why He came. Not as an infant, but at the beginning of His ministry when people were beginning to figure out that He was something different than they had ever encountered before.

Early in His ministry, Jesus has a conversation with one of the Jewish leaders. He comes to Jesus at night to ask questions about who He is and what He is about, having seen His miracles and heard Him teach.

He comes at night because he is afraid. He knows that what Jesus is doing has the potential to start a lot of trouble, and that His teachings are different than anyone has heard before. So, he comes to ask Jesus some questions, and he gets way more than he bargained for, in fact, he is one of the first to hear WHY Jesus has come.

And what has brought Jesus to us is love.

Turn with me to a familiar passage, but not one we associate with Christmas, [John 3:16-21](#).

Nicodemus and Jesus have gone back and forth about being “born again” and the meaning behind that phrase. And Nicodemus doesn't get it, so Jesus explains the why to him, since he cannot understand the how.

First, Jesus tells Nicodemus that He has come because of the love that God has for the world. Now the word world here in this context encompasses all people- God is broken over the state of the world, but His love for US drives Him to intervene.

The advent of Jesus is the ultimate demonstration of the love that God has for us. I mean look at [Philippians 2](#), and think about all that this act cost Jesus for 33 years:

emptied

servant

humbled

death

The greatest demonstrations of love often involve sacrifice. And I can't think of any greater sacrifice than for someone who is infinitely everything, to allow themselves to become, in comparison, nothing.

Philippians, Colossians, Philemon The Hymn to Christ (2:6–11)

Thus the emptying is that God became human, Lord became servant, and obedience took him to death. The verb “emptied” (NASB) does not require a knowledge of what was emptied (Rom 4:14; 1 Cor 1:17; 9:15). Often it is translated simply “to render void, of no effect.” **This passage affirms simply that Christ left his position, rank, and privilege. They were “of no effect.”**

And He did so willingly. Go back to [John 3:16](#)...gave- not coerced, or forced, or grudgingly...gave implies a willingness to make this decision.

John 1–11 (2) A Discourse on Salvation (3:11–21)

John's Gospel does not offer the world a superficial idea of the love of God in salvation. **The verbs for “loved” (ēgapēsen) and “gave” (edōken) here express the genuine self-giving nature of God** in having sent (apesteilen) his “only Son” (monogenous huiou) on an unrepeatable mission into the world

So the gift is offered- a love that is unconditionally given...but it must be responded to in order to be received. How will we respond to Jesus' love?

We cannot be forced to take this gift, or it is not a gift. **So, the advent of Jesus invites us to do something- to believe.**

To believe in Who- look at verse 18- God's only Son, Jesus.

We have access to eternal life when we are willing to trust Jesus over ourselves.

John 1–11 (2) A Discourse on Salvation (3:11–21)

The full perspective is that God is the initiator and principal actor in salvation, and we should never think that salvation originated with us (cf. 1 John 4:9–10). **God, however, has given humanity a sense of freedom and requires us to make a choice. Accordingly, people are responsible for their believing.** It is unproductive theological speculation, therefore, to minimize either the role of God or of humanity in the salvation process. The Bible and John 3:16 recognize the roles of both

So, if that is the case, if belief in Jesus is the key and God loves us, why allow a choice? Is it because God is playing a game?

Not even close. Look at verse 17- Jesus did not come to condemn but to save.

John 1–11 (2) A Discourse on Salvation (3:11–21)

God's purpose in sending Jesus was not to condemn but to build the bridge in reconciling sacrifice for human beings. God's goal always has been the salvation or wholeness of the world (John 3:17). The Bible will not allow the reader to blame God for the desperate plight of humanity. The sin problem is a human one that since the beginning of time has been repeated continuously.

His end goal was salvation, but here is another thing about love- it is not something that can be forced.

John 1–11 (2) A Discourse on Salvation (3:11–21)

What makes human choice so crucial in this Gospel is the immediate nature of judgment/condemnation. Condemnation is not left to some remote future that might lull the unbeliever into a comfortable feeling that for a while one can sit on the fence of uncommitment. John makes it absolutely clear that condemnation has “already” (ēdē) taken place for the unbelievers. The idea here then is not one of a possible projected condemnation for the unbeliever but the necessity of escaping an already existing condemnation

Go with me to [1 Corinthians 13](#) (explain about the definite article in this passage)

Look at verses 4-7.

“It does not insist on its own way...” - Jesus wants you to experience His love. He wants to forgive you, but you have to respond to His invitation. You have to accept the gift He is offering.

1 Corinthians (2) What Love Does and Does Not Do (13:4–7)

The next item, “is not self-seeking,” is a phrase virtually identical in Greek to the exhortation of 10:24, “let no one seek the things of himself,” which is balanced with “but the things of another,” and Paul’s description of his pattern of life in 10:33 as not seeking his own good but the good of the many. This characteristic of love provides a direct link to the previous discussion of food sacrificed to idols and the hermeneutic of love that guides Paul’s response

So, what keeps us from responding to His love? We love something else more. **Look at 3:19-20.**

Loving Jesus means we stop loving something else- the things that made Jesus' coming necessary in the first place- our sin.

We have to be willing to tear down our idols and replace them with a real God.

John 1–11 (2) A Discourse on Salvation (3:11–21)

Here the idea is expanded by the clear indication that what one does reflects who one is. Darkness, hating, and doing evil together are set against light, living by the truth, and the works done through God. The contrast between light and darkness is somewhat akin to the ethical dualism in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where a distinction is made between the sons of light and the sons of darkness (cf. 1 QS 3–4). Here those who side with the way of darkness were for John children of the devil, the prince (archōn) of the world (cf. John 8:44; 12:31).

The close connection between doing and being—namely, between practicing good or evil works and the nature of a person—is an important theological concept in John because believing is not merely a matter of mental affirmation but of life commitment

Everyone is going to do that at some point- look at [Philippians 2:9-11](#).

At some point the choice will end. We live now in a time of choosing.

But when we experience the forgiveness of Jesus, accept the gift of His love, it is transformative. and it is secure, even in the midst of the worst circumstances.

Look at [Romans 8:38-39](#).

Romans 3. Living in the Spirit (8:1–39)

The final two verses of chap. 8 call for reflection rather than for interpretation. They supply the climax of Paul's inspired and eloquent words of praise to the love of God. The apostle voiced his confidence that there is nothing that could separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. His list of ten terms moves from physical danger through the hierarchy of superhuman powers, those that now exist or ever will, powers from on high or from below, and culminates in the inclusive phrase "anything else in God's whole world." There is absolutely nothing that can ever drive a wedge between the children of God and their Heavenly Father. It is true that life contains its full share of hardships. But God is at work in all the circumstances of life to conform those whom he has chosen into the likeness of his dear Son. The process is God's. We are his workmanship. The process of sanctification is intended to bring us into conformity with the nature of our Creator. Although it may at times involve some serious pruning, we may be sure that love is at work on our behalf. We are forever united with the one who is perfect love.

- Robert Mounce, NAC, Romans

What an amazing promise. When you are His, nothing comes between you and His love.

What would it take today for you to say yes to that kind of love?