



“Advent 2021”
Wk. 2 LOVE
By Pastor Jody May 12/012/2021

John 3:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

1 John 4:9 ESV

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

[REVIEW]

HOPE – Biblical hope / Christmas hope is the confidence that good things are still to come anchored in past events.

[CONNECT/INTRO]

Music is the existential philosophy of the day, it is the popular opinion of the current generation, it speaks to the joys and pains, the dilemmas and solutions, and nothing has been so debated in music as the **condition of LOVE**. Love is the MOST talked about topic in the music business, right now if I were to ask you for 10 songs that talked about it, you would have no trouble telling me. Just for kicks let me tell you about the songs that came to my head this past week and I will even go one step further and make sure “Love” is in the title.

- “She Loves You” by the Beatles (1964) – Rejoice for someone loves you!
- “All You Need is Love” by the Beatles (1967) – It’s the most necessary thing!
- “Somebody to Love” by Queen (1976) – If I only had someone!
- "How Deep is Your Love" by the Bee Gees (1977) – How far does it go!?
- "Best of My Love" by The Emotions (1977) – I only get the best!
- “All Out Of Love” by Air Supply (1980) – Miss it when it’s gone!
- "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" by Queen (1980) – When you can’t figure out!
- “What’s Love got to do with it” by Tina Turner (1984) – Done with it!
- “Pride, In the Name of Love” by U2 (1984) Love is about the power of Will!



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- “Is This Love” by Whitesnake (1987) – Never knew what it was!
- “I will Always Love You” by Whitney Spears (1992) – I am a psycho!
- “Power of Love” Celine Dion (1993) or Huey Lewis and the News (1985)
- “I Want to Know What Love Is” by Foreigner (1999) – Still asking for it!
- “Love Shack” by the B52s (1989) – You can find it at parties!

Where is it!? How do you get it!? What can it do for you!? I give up but at the same time I need more! I can't stand it you're too good to me, but wait, you left me again! There has never been such a dilemma to the human condition as trying to answer the need for LOVE!

This morning as a part of our focus on Advent we will focus on the topic of Love as it is shown and defined by God. In our study perhaps we can give better handles on why the need to be loved exists and what you can do about it, if like our song writers you are helplessly stuck trying to figure it out. **Christmas is all about experiencing Love as God intended.** 3 things we will look at today: Love is a **requirement for all people**, it is the **solution** to our **biggest problem**, and it is the **greatest of Christmas presents** you will ever receive!

1. LOVE is a REQUIREMENT for ALL PEOPLE.

And as I said last week, Christmas seems to heighten all situations in our lives. Let me tell you, if you have been having relationship woes, if your love life is in the toilet, if you are lonely, then you are definitely feeling the need for a Love fix! Good news for you today, I believe that when we come to understand LOVE has already been delivered(advent), demonstrated(cross), and declared(gospel) to us **BY GOD** then the feeling of **desperation** goes away. For you see, mankind was created for love and only one 'being' can provide for the deep wells of our hearts that need to be filled with love, and that is God!

Let me say it this way: God is not a **replacement** for romantic love, He's not a **stand-in** for poor family relationships, He's not a **fill-in** when you are between friendships, He's the **source** of all **Love**, and by experiencing the glorious love of God you can then place your earthly relationships in the right priority in your life and give love to them instead of demanding from them. God's unconditional love



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comes from a source that will never run out contrary to how people treat you, you will always be filled... This has been the intent since the **beginning**.

As we went last week to the beginning to see where HOPE began, as in the promise of GRACE that was discovered in Gen. 3:15, today we will go back even further, to the creation of man. There is a very important fact that we need to remember this morning as we talk about the concept of love, and I would say this fact will affect your whole life!

Genesis 1:27 ESV

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

We are the cut-out representation of God, it is the reason we were made, to **resemble Him**, both sexes, and since God is a Spirit, this has nothing to do with physical features. That’s why rebellion against God’s purposes, to IMAGE Him, is sin because you were made for a specific purpose, to represent God, not yourself. Now with that in mind let’s go to another letter written by John that we already covered this year.

1 John 4:8 ESV

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Image bearers (Gen.1:27) of God-love, because **God is love**. John is the man when it comes to the topic of talking about love in the NT, he is responsible for half of the references to it; 51 times just here in 1 John. Today, Christians are reclaimed image bearers from the world, and they are to love, for that is what an image bearer does, it copies what it represents.

{PROBLEM W/WORLDY LOVE}

The reason that **love is such a dilemma** in our modern day, as shown by our modern poets/songsters (world), is love is something you fall into, it just happens,



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it finds you, and therefore, to experience love is all a gamble. It is dependent on being attracted to someone; it only happens by chance. But scripture teaches us that love is a choice/act of will/that will produce positive feelings/affections in the one that we sacrificially give to. Look at this example:

Romans 5:8 ESV

⁸ but God **shows his LOVE** for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God demonstrates love to us first as **lost sinners** so that we will see an incredible choice of **will to care** for the **unlovely first**, not leaving it up to chance, and by doing so it changes our **affections** towards God. That is the image He puts out there for us, that is what we are called to do, to love by choice not by chance!

We were created to experience it, both by **receiving AND giving**, and if you don't do that, according to 1 John, you know not God. Most current westernized people believe love is something owed to them to experience and should be given to them by people first before they decide if they want to do the same.

The dilemma this morning – Scripture says, **Love is a requirement for us to give for we bear the Image of a God, and it is a requirement to receive and has already been given to us first. NOW the requirement is, it needs to be released from us to this world, not to get love but that others may learn what is the source of FULFILLING love.**

[CHALLENGES]

Right now, some of you stoic types I know you may be thinking, love is for the week, and at one time I have to tell you I thought the same way. I grew up watching army and cowboy movies, and the man of my house where I lived was an image bearer of the men I watched on the screen. It seemed early on that my father saw emotional softness as a distraction, yet he could be angry at the drop of a hat. What he taught me was that love wasn't necessary for life, you can be a good man without it, and secretly love would make you emotionally vulnerable.



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At 27 I had gone through enough bad/good relationships, and I had finally come to accept that I would most likely be a bachelor for the rest of my life and I was fine with that. I had escaped my early 20s avoiding the pitfalls of marriage like my college friends. I had become an image bearer of the men I had idolized and while I was my own master I was very much alone. It was in my 27th year of my life that God sent Heather into it, gave me a purpose for my strength of will, and now almost 23 years later I don't know what I would have done without Love in my life. I was made for it, I was created in God's Image, not John Wayne's, Arnold Schwarzenegger's, not Sylvester Stallone's, not Kurt Russel's, I was made in God's image and love was delivered to me and required of me by my God to give sacrificially.

Now whether you get married or not, let me be the first to say that it is not for everyone ([1 Cor. 7](#)). The ultimate goal is not to get married but the goal for all of mankind is to help make image bearers, disciples, and you can do that without getting married. **BUT the way in which you do this is by LOVE.** Disciple making without love is like marriage without love, **it's all work and no play...**

This need for love though hits us very early. There have been numerous studies now where we have learned that babies need to have skin to skin contact when they are born. This is the way they learn communication and there are specific hormones that are released that sooth an infant's hormones through that contact. It is also important because babies learn how to image bear in the first few months which is why it is important for both men and women to hold their babies. Love is a basic human need as much as air, food, water, and shelter, without it we suffer and even die.¹

In Japan in 2020 suicides were on the rise, an over 70% increase among females. All these females were single and the primary bread winners for themselves in fields that were dependent upon human interaction. Many of them never married and through the isolation of the pandemic suicide went through the roof. What was missing in all these image bearers was the basic need of love, it was

¹ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/infant-touch/>



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nowhere to be found and for the lack of it, they despaired and for many it led to death.²

Love is a Requirement for all people, marriage isn't, and as a matter of fact for many, marriage has become the vacuum for love BUT love is still required of all people to give and to receive. That's why we are SO THANKFUL for the church because here you can garner all the love you need. BUT, if you don't receive it from the most important person in your life, GOD first, you will face the biggest problem of your life all alone, and it's a problem you can't fix.

2. LOVE is the SOLUTION to our BIGGEST PROBLEM.

John 3:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Man, how we all love this verse! It is one of the first verses we learn as children, it is the verse most quoted on posterboards at sporting events, it is the permeating message of Advent itself! Yet, the impact of this verse goes lacking, it is not as glorious, unless you emphasize the issue as to why God **had to love** the world in such a way as to send His Son. Jesus didn't incarnate into the world because He wanted a vaca., or that He thought it would be so cool to be like us, He was perfectly content to live in Spirit form, as the 2nd person of the trinity! But His incarnation was necessary to show what a true Image bearer of God looks like AND to rescue us from a condition that we had gotten into.

John 3 is a HUGE chapter in the Bible, spend some time praying and then reading that chapter in total this week. You will walk away with the sense that God loves first, AND God saves alone!

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55837160>



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There are two words which open our eyes to a BIG problem we all share, and when I say all, I mean mankind, not just the church.

John 3:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not **PERISH** but have eternal life.

To understand what God’s love was accomplishing you have to look past the comma in the sentence, whoever believes that God sent the Son, the first Advent, should not **PERISH!** ἀπόλλυμαι (*apollymai*), ἀπόλλυμι (*apollymi*)³ - *to destroy fully (reflexively, to perish, or lose), literally or figuratively:—destroy, die, lose, mar, perish.* That is referring to an eternal death, definitely not universalism, the effect of believing in this Love is to gain eternal life, it is to gain the Son, it is to gain the intentional care of the Father, it is to gain the reason for your existence being made in His image; you were created to be loved, you were created to image love to the world, and in return you receive eternal life, eternal purpose, eternal satisfaction!

So, the question arises, **“What does that say about us before we believe in Jesus?”**, what is the state of my condition, why does it lead to death!? The clue comes in the next verse:

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to **CONDEMN** the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

The presence of the Son, Jesus, coming into the world, if it was not defined by the Father as a loving act, has an automatic effect. If the Son comes without the restraining and grace-filled/unconditional love of God, the world is forfeited... **Condemn** - κρίνω (*krinō*). *vb. to pass judgment, to make a judgment. This verb describes the act of carrying out a judicial process or making a judgment.*⁴ If Jesus enters into this world without the decree of saving some to make a people for

³ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁴ Aernie, M. (2014). *Judgment, Final*. D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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Himself, the world would be judged for its’ rebellion. **You would perish because all deserve to die...**

A HUGE problem is revealed because unless Love is received by us through faith, we are destined to perish by judgment.... And what’s more the condition of our naivety is revealed in a conversation Jesus has with Nicodemus:

John 3:3-5;8 ESV

³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God... ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

To be saved is to be saved by the will of of God alone, the Spirit does the regeneration not one’s will, and it is sent by the Father. It is not influenced by our cuteness or perceived worthiness, it is by God’s sovereign election (Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Eph. 2:1-3).

This is why the preaching of the Gospel is so important, and even more why it is important at Christmas time. We get the chance to explain to people God loves first, to save sinners from the wrath of God! **Christmas is the increase in the opportunities of preaching the gospel by everyone**, because only by the proclamation or the gospel will people be saved.

To be fair I must take us to scripture, to a place where many will not dare tread during the Christmas season:

Revelation 20:14-15 ESV

¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.



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This is the picture of the Perishing and the Condemnation in John 3:16-17 written by the same apostle. John is painting a picture because he is imaging God’s love to us by warning us. John said, in John 1, that Jesus came full of Grace and Truth, that means good will towards men because Jesus brings the news that death awaits all unless we turn from our sin and accept God’s love.

Jody why all the doom and gloom @Christmas you may ask?

Part of the Christmas story is to understand why we need to focus on Love because it is the answer to our **biggest problem**, perishing because of our sin, condemnation/judgment of sin and guilt. BUT lastly, love also delivers in a HUGE way, more joy than any earthly present you can receive.

3. LOVE is the GREATEST of all CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

John 3:16-17 ESV

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **WHOEVER** believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be **SAVED** through him.

Whoever, believes in him.... The answer for those condemned by their sin, the answer for those that will die, is to simply believe. ‘Whoever’ is not the offer like that of a Jeanie in a bottle; whoever finds it gets three wishes. But the whoever(s) that believe are those the Spirit has caused to be born again (Jn. 3:3). Believing in Jesus is what removes our condemnation as Paul notes:

Galatians 2:16 ESV

yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through **faith** in Jesus Christ, ... because by works of the law no one will be justified.

This verse says you are justified by faith, that means when Jesus returns for condemnation/judgement your trial is already over, you have received the sentence of not guilty, you are looked at as righteous, and you get to move on to



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Revelation 21 waiting on the Supper of the Lamb. So, let me ask you this morning how are you doing accepting the fact of being loved by FAITH?

[FAITH]

The Polar Express is one of my new favorite Christmas movies. One, I like cartoons, two, I like the fantasy of the North pole and Santa, and three, it teaches the power of faith. In the story the young boy fights for faith, he’s been to the N. Pole, He’s sat in Santa’s lap, and he was given the first gift of Christmas, a sleigh bell. Still at the end we see the boy fight for faith with the physical gift in his hand and even then, it was hard for him to believe.

But at Christmas the gift of Christmas to us is God’s Love delivered by the **GIFT of FAITH**. We weren’t there the first Advent and saw the babe, we didn’t hear Him preach at the sea of Galilee, we didn’t see Him heal the sick and cast out demons, we didn’t see Him put on a cross, we didn’t see His resurrected form in the upper room, we didn’t hear the words “go make disciples” at the mount. But family we didn’t need to be there because faith is not about experiencing Christ in the flesh it is about a gift from our Father (Eph. 2:8-10) which changes everything!

1 Peter 1:8 ESV

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

The gift of Love at Christmas is the greatest gift, because if you have it, if you believe it, then you know that it was given to you not by your choice but by God’s. He chose to love you first, to redeem you, to rescue you, to SAVE you and that means this will be a love that is never LOST!

1 John 4:9 ESV

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

He is loving us by telling us “YES, GOD LOVES HIS CREATION” and does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet. 3:9) so He sends Jesus in the humblest of beginnings.



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The beauty of the first Advent, is not family get togethers, it's not time off work, it's not eating all the great food, it's not watching bowl games or Hallmark movies, it's not getting or giving gifts, first ADVENT is GLORIOUS because we celebrate our receiving of our King that came to save His people not condemn them and He causes you to believe it so you would be saved!

[CHALLENGES TO LEAVE WITH]

Family, I know that there are holes in some of your hearts right now. I know that for some this is a first year without a loved one. For some you, you will experience a Christmas without a wayward child. For some of us we will only have pictures and memories. And it is so hard to focus off of loss, when the world screams that you Should be happy!

But family DO NOT FORGET you are called to bear the image of God so first realize that the point of Christmas is not about getting emotional feel-goods from others it is about remembering when you had no chance, God loved you first!

Then in taking you in and making you family God has asked you not to sit and wait to be loved again but gives you the opportunity to go and love someone, for love is a choice of will made by you. You are to go and care for someone else without the promise of a return and in that you will find your joy.

The Spirit of Christmas is to demonstrate to others:

- For God so loved this world, that's me, therefore I will do the same.
- As the Father has given unto me so will I give to others.
- That through my choice of love, whoever receives it, might see the love of God.
- That they may come to believe in Him and not perish so they too may have everlasting life.

Family, we **need to LEARN to love** because it is required, we **NEED love** for it answers our biggest problem, and we **need TO love** for it is the best gift we have ever received that demands to be shared.



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[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has loved us first with the giving of His only begotten Son.

Go in the name of the Son, that has loved us first, that while we were still sinners, He died for us.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that has loved us first, by granting us faith as a gift so we could believe, empowering us to give the gift of love to others.