



LOVE

ADVENT | Week 4

Ask any 5th grader you can find and have them finish this sentence, “God is _____.” Nine out of 10 will say, “love.”

You can find the origin of this sentence in the first letter that the Gospel writer John wrote. It says this,

“God is love. 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. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:8-10, ESV).

Notice that John writes, “in this is love...” twice. He wants us to look into what he is describing so that we can rightly see what “love” really means.

The first part of love’s meaning is seen in God sending His only Son into the world. That is what we celebrate on Christmas. The Son of God stepped out of eternity into history. Jesus entered the world as one of us. He became one of us. God became man. He gave Himself to us. You can’t truly know what love means unless you know and believe the Christmas story.

The second part of John’s teaching on love comes in verse 10, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Not only did God give Himself to us in giving us His Son, but He also gave Himself for us in sending His Son to be the *sacrifice for our sin*.

Christmas and the cross come together to show us what it means that, “God is love.” As we peer into the wooden manger this season, may we be reminded of the wooden cross as well.

Because, “in this is love...”

Celebrating the Love of God

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.”

Isaiah 11:1-10 (ESV)

At first glance, this well-known passage does not seem to be particularly about love. But as we examine it more closely, we can see it truly is. Because the perfect love of God is a perfect balance of amazing justice and amazing love.

One image that comes to mind from the image Isaiah uses is that of a big dead stump. This represents Christ's humanity, with all the sordid stories from Jesse's ancestors—from the betrayal of Joseph by big brother Judah to the adultery and murder committed by David, the man after God's own heart.

But wait! Look and see this tiny, tender shoot emerging from the seemingly dead stump of humanity, borne out of the love of God. Now true life can finally spring forth. The branch from Jesse's roots, imbued with the Spirit of God, invites us to peer through the misty shrouds of time into a recovered and redeemed garden. It is a place where there is no injustice, no suffering, and no strife anymore. And as our blurry vision comes into focus, we see Jesus—the outcome of perfect judgment and righteousness. And with that perfect judgment, armed with righteousness, wickedness is utterly destroyed. As we ponder these amazing things, we must agree that it would not be right for any sin to be left unpunished.

The results thrill our hearts. The picture painted for us is of the little tyke who plays with snakes, leading carnivorous creatures in a peaceful parade. This is how the curse is reversed. Paradise lost has been regained. And on that day, there will no longer be any danger or suffering or disease anymore.

“Because of the love of God, the only champion who can bring this about must be born.”

Because of the love of God, the only champion who can bring this about must be born. Jesus came from the stump of Jesse and because of Him, we will forever celebrate the love of God.

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. What words and phrases are used to describe the Holy Spirit in this passage?
2. Isaiah 11:2 points us forward to the coming Messiah and to a familiar scene in the New Testament. Read Matthew 3:13-17. How do we see Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled over 700 years later?
3. What does this passage teach us about the Lord's judgment? How is His judgment different from the way we tend to judge others around us (see vv. 3-4)?
4. How do verses 9 and 10 describe the world and the people in it during that time? How is this unlike our world today, and how does contrast encourage you as you prepare for the return of our “Root of Jesse”?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. In today's passage, Isaiah promises the coming of a Savior—One will judge the world with perfect righteousness, justice, and faithfulness. He is referred to here as “a shoot...from the stump of Jesse”, a “Branch”, and “the Root of Jesse.” Read Romans 15:7-13 aloud. Who is this promised One?
2. Verse 3 also tells us His judgment will be completely different from the way *we* judge others. How does it feel when someone judges you based on something they saw or heard about you? We hate it when we are judged based on our appearance, our behavior, or gossip, but how quick are you to turn around and judge others using these same standards?
3. As a result of Christ's *righteous* judgment, perfect peace and harmony will exist among all of God's creations (vv. 6-9), even between those who were once considered “enemies.” What usually happens when we judge others *unrighteously*? Do we experience this same kind of peace and unity with those whom we judge, or do we create divisions and conflicts? Do our judgments of others bring you closer together, or drive you further apart? How can you follow Jesus' example and be a peacemaker even as you make judgments about the people and the world around you?

Notes:

Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

