



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...”

When Tomorrow Creeps Into Today

“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

Isaiah 2:1-5 (ESV)

As children, many of us looked forward to Christmas morning more than any other day of the year. This excitement, however, was almost always fueled by a desire to receive presents rather than some super-spiritual reason. For children, the thrill of Christmas morning can be so encompassing it occupies all their thoughts and makes sleep nearly impossible, even during the days leading up to Christmas.

Have you ever looked forward to something so much that, even though it was happening in the future, you couldn't keep it from creeping into your today?

The prophet Isaiah wrote about that kind of day more than 2,600 years ago after the nation of Israel split and the northern kingdom had fallen to the Assyrians. It was a time of great spiritual and political upheaval for Judah as they narrowly escaped defeat and found themselves politically, economically, and militarily weakened.

The previous chapter of Isaiah outlines God's complaint against His chosen nation—they had become so rebellious and sinful that He had grown tired of their sacrifices, stopped listening to their prayers, and allowed their enemies to overrun them.

Isaiah points Judah to a coming day when Jerusalem will be the most powerful and influential city in the world, not because of their great might, but because that is where the Son of God will live. Both the law and the Word of the Lord (v. 3) will go out from Jerusalem because Jesus will be speaking it!

In that day, it will not just be Jews who come to Jerusalem to worship but "all the nations." The nations will go there because God is doing two things—He's teaching them His ways (v. 3) and judging between the nations, perfectly and rightly settling all their disputes.

Isaiah identifies two things that will happen because of God's actions. The first is that the people will "walk in His paths" (v. 3), which means they will obey Him. The second is that because God is judging between nations, they don't have to resort to military power to protect themselves, which is why they convert their weapons of war into tools for farming (v. 4). Not only do they not need weapons for waging war, they even stop training to fight! No need for armies. No more young men and women dying to settle conflict. All nations go to the perfect judge.

Isaiah then concludes this section in verse 5 with an exhortation for the people of Israel (the house of Jacob) to "walk in the light of the Lord." He points to a day when the rest of the world will know the truth that they have been taught, and encourages them to live in light of that truth today. Instead of rebelling and looking to others for strength in times of national distress, turn to their God who one day will set everything right.

Sometimes, when things are going well in our lives, it's easy to grow complacent, especially spiritually. Isaiah 2:1-5 reminds us that even when things seem to be going well, it's nothing compared to how great it will be one day when Jesus returns. Reading the prophetic passages of Scripture help us put today in the right perspective and keeps us from loving this world too much.

The same is true if we're going through rough times, like Isaiah's original audience. Whether it's national distress—mass shootings, political struggle, economic crisis—or a personal challenge—the loss of a loved one, cancer, or broken relationships—looking forward to a day when Jesus will make all things right increases our love and gratitude for Him.

“... looking forward to a day when Jesus will make all things right increases our love and gratitude for Him.”

Let a little of this tomorrow creep into today.

Prayer

Lord help me not be so consumed with today—both the trials of today or the pleasures of this world, even the good things that just aren't as good as you—that I lose sight of you—your perfect goodness, your great grace and love towards me. Please help to live today with my eyes on you!

Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. In verse 3, what is it that Isaiah says will attract the nations to Zion (Jerusalem)? Do you likewise find yourself “streaming” toward the teaching God's Word, or away from it? How highly do you prioritize the knowledge of “His ways” and “His paths” in your own life (v. 3)?
2. What words and phrases does Isaiah use to describe the temple of God in verses 2-4? What kinds of things will occur in and from this “new Jerusalem”?
3. In today's passage, Isaiah helps us peer into the window of eternity. He describes a time when weapons of war are transformed into instruments of service, peace will abound, and God's law is obeyed. If this hopeful reality only exists in the future, why do you think Isaiah exhorts Israel (and us) to “walk in the light of the Lord” today?

Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. What do you think it means to “walk in the light of the Lord” (v. 5)?
2. How have you seen your family members, your friends, your teachers, or your

leaders applying and living out the truths of God's Word? How have their godly examples been a source of light in your life?

3. What are some benefits have you experienced as a result of obeying God's Word? What consequences have you experienced as a result of disobedience?
4. How does the promise of a restored future, where sin or suffering are a thing of the past, give you hope as you seek to walk in the light of the Lord today?

Notes:

Year: _____

Year: _____

Year: _____

