

# LESSONS IN ADVENT



## Love in 2020

### 1 John 4:7-12 (NRSV)

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

#### Teaching

For this third week of Advent we are talking about love. The true love of God and the love that should carry from our relationship with God to our relationships with others. As Christians, we hear the word “love” and the phrase “love your neighbor” a lot. We hear it in so many ways where it’s used and abused and clung to as an excuse for why we shouldn’t address conflict or unrighteousness. If we just say we love everyone, we

can just ignore the issues and move on, right? Well, if you heard the lesson last week about peace, you know that wrong.

In today's world there is so much noise and news and disagreement and violence and darkness, it can be easy to want to turn away. However, scripture teaches us that we are known to be followers of God through our love. Not cheap, sweep things under the rug love, but true, passionate, raw, deep, dedicated, forgiving and reconciling love. That kind of love is hard, but that's what true love is. When Jesus came to earth, he didn't turn his head away from those who needed him the most. Jesus got down and went into the darkness to shine the light of those who those who needed it and accepted it. Jesus got raw and dedicated his life and death to reconciling us with our creator. Now that is true love!

In scripture we find some important descriptors of what love really is:

1. Love is from God. True love is not born of this world. Love comes from God because God is love. We can name so many characteristics of God, but at the end of day love is main thing God is. God loved us and wanted us so much that he created a whole world for us and created US. God loved us so much that Christ came to save us from the darkness and brokenness of this world. God loves us so much that Christ will never give up on us or turn his back on us. To love others and to love ourselves, we need to realize that we were made of and for the love of God. We were created in love and are intended to live in that love. When we live in Christ's love it makes it so much easier to live out Christ's love.
2. Love shows that God lives in us. When we are dedicated to live out Christ's love, it's so much easier to be peacemakers and hold onto the hope of Christ. When we love ourselves and others, we want to be at peace with them! When we love ourselves and others, we can easily hold onto the hope of our Loving Creator. When we love others, they see God! God is seen through the acts of love that we give to others. When we care for each other, forgive each other, serve each other, and all the other ways we love each other, we are seeing the work and character of God.

3. Love is hard work. Jesus died to show us how much God loved us. If we are going to show others the love of God, we have to do the hard work. We have to stop living only for ourselves. Our calling to love others means putting aside our differences and expectations and selfishness. At the end of the day, it's not only about us. It's about God first and **everyone** God created – including us, but not stopping with us! Putting ourselves aside for the good of the other, for the good of the community, is hard work. Choosing love and showing love takes effort and thoughtfulness, time and energy. To love like Jesus does, means dying to ourselves to live the life of love that God created for us.

Imagine an elementary school band concert. The budding musicians pick up their instruments and proceed to squeak and squawk their way through the song list. Harmonious notes are overpowered by discordant screeches set to a lurching and dragging rhythm. Yet the audience listens for the melody in the noise, and at the end people are smiling and applauding as congratulations abound.

What may have been twenty minutes of random instrumental noise is music to the ears of the parents, teachers, and caregivers. They didn't listen for the wrong notes or notice when the drummer rushed the tempo. Instead, they were listening with their hearts and hearing the concert through the filter of the love they have for their children. Love transforms the clanging gongs and noisy symbols into music worth listening to.

We can play God's melody in a discordant world. When we live Christ's love both inside and out, we experience the hope, peace, and joy of the God's redeeming work in all that we do.

### **Discussion/Reflection**

- What is love to you?
- How do you know that God is love?
- How can you show God's love to the world?
- Where have you seen the hard work of love in action?
- How does love lead to peace and hope?

## **Prayer**

God of light, we remember the love you have shown for the world through Jesus Christ. In a world full of hatred, division, and apathy help us live out your love. Amen.

**Annie Westbrook**

Youth Pastor

Johns Creek Baptist Church