

The Greatest Gift: God's Love | 1 John 4:9-11

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Preacher: Pastor Patrick Dailey

[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.

Let's dive in together into God's Word. Alright, well good morning everyone, and I can say Merry Christmas now, yeah? Merry Christmas everyone. I just want to say I'm really glad that all of you are here during this cold season, this time where we come together and we see all of the busyness, people shopping, people are preparing for family and friends coming together.

It's just a wonderful time. Again, I'm always reminded when we think of these Christmas songs to be reminded of who Jesus Christ is. Today's sermon is about the greatest gift God's love, and specifically speaking of the fact that Jesus Christ is revelation.

He is being revealed to us, being born in the manger. And for some of us, we may get so caught up in the busyness of wrapping gifts and buying gifts.

[1:26] I remember years ago, I watched a movie, it's not really a popular movie, right? It's a movie with Arnold Schwarzenegger, eh? Yeah, there you go.

And the idea of this movie is he's trying to get the turbo man. Jingle all the way. I'm going to be a seaman, you don't have to raise your hand.

Well, I mean, you got it, right? And it's a good, but it's so bad it's good. I don't know if that makes any sense, right? But the premise of it is he forgets to get the toy.

And then he goes on, he ends up becoming turbo man, he ends up getting the turbo man for his kid.

Sometimes we can identify, of trying to find the right gift for our family, our friends, and maybe we might identify once with Arnold Schwarzenegger, at least in that movie context.

And sometimes we get so caught up in that. We get caught up in the busyness of the Christmas season, running around, and it's like, okay, I got to finish, I got to make my check, let's make sure things are good by the end of the year.

[2:35] But it's a time for us to really reflect on friends, family, but most importantly, the birth of Jesus Christ.

How many of us have gotten so busy with forgotten that? We're not raising dry moments. What I want us to do as we think about that, and yes, your pastor did bring up Arnold Schwarzenegger, that's kind of a wild one.

Let's turn our vials. I want us to turn to, it's going to be page 1212, 1212, in your ESV Bibles, or your Bible of your choice, your mobile device.

It's going to be 1 John, chapter 4, verses 9, through 11. And as we're turning there, I want us to keep in mind, again, the greatest gift that we celebrate this Christmas, this Advent season, is God showing His love through Jesus Christ.

And today, as we go over through 1 John, chapter 4, verses 9, through 11, we find that this is where God's love is revealed.

[3:49] And because of this revelation, we are called to live and love like Him. So are we all there? 1 John, chapter 4, verses 9, we can start in verse 7.

Beloved, let us love one another. For love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God because of God is love.

Verse 9, let's read this together, church. And this, the love of God, was made what? And that is best among us, that God sent His only Son into the world so that we might what?

Live through Him. And this is love. Not that we have loved God, but He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to also love one another. And it goes on in verse 12, finishing that section. No one has ever seen God if we love one another.

[4:54] God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. We start off with that verse 9, and we'll go to that next slide here. And it's always a question when we're reading it, what is happening?

What is the first things that we can see in these verses? Let's go to that next slide. There's three things that we can see right away. Is that God's love is revealed in Christ, right?

That God sent His Son into the world so that we might live in Him. We look at that verse 9, that God sent His only Son into the world.

We think of God's love being beyond anything that's beyond our understanding. For many of us, we think of the word love, and love has so many different meanings for us in the English language.

Some of us may, as children, we love our toys. That's different than how you love your parents, or at least I certainly hope so. How you love your pet, how you love your friends is different than romantic love, or different how you love a child.

[6:03] And the love that we speak of when we're talking about the love that God has for us is an everlasting love. It is a divine love. It's love that is really beyond what we can understand.

And sometimes that can be so, kind of gets you a little bit, and thinking about that, right? That God's love is revealed in Christ. It's becoming manifest, meaning that God's love became physical.

For us Bible students, the word that came flesh, right? In the beginning was the word, and the word was God, right? The word becoming flesh. God's love became physical and accessible for humanity in Christ's coming, knowing that Jesus Christ was born in the manger, as the fulfillment not one, but so many different prophecies.

And for some of us, when we hear this good Christmas story, let us realize the fulfillment of prophecy is paving the way for salvation that a child being born in the manger of all places.

I kind of wish that the Lord was born in a more suitable bed, but nevertheless, humble beginnings when we think of this. We think of Jesus Christ as ministry, his life as miracles, that we've been going over in previous weeks, the parables, the teachings of Christ.

[7:38] And knowing that this child through him, salvation will be made available for us, that's remarkable.

The story, it begins when we think of Jesus in the manger, where the child to be born is Christ the Lord, and this is God's love sensed into the world. This is God's love revealed in Christ.

That's how we understand verse 9. We then go to verse 10, that God's love came for all people. It's a very powerful language when we think about it, right?

When we're looking at this verse, we see in verse 10 that he sent his son to be the propitiation of our sins. It's showing the purpose of God's love.

It is showing that God had a plan for Christ, much as God had a plan for humanity. There is this greatest gift when we think of gifts on Christmas morning.

[8:48] We always think of, take this prop right here, we think of little gifts being given to us. Let us think of the free gift of salvation.

That there is an invitation to salvation for all who believe. Now, it may not be wrapped up in wrapping paper like this, but we often think that the greatest gift is being God's love for us, sending his son Jesus Christ into the world.

Will you receive this gift? Will you say yes, Lord? Will you say yes to his death, burial, and resurrection, and especially when we think of the context here, Christ being born in that manger, that goes humble beginnings.

Let us be reminded this was God's plan. She was sore us to him. We think of the Jewish culture, the idea that was being separated from the presence of the Lord.

In fact, very often when you read scripture when it's saying, having the face of God facing towards you, you never wanted the face of God to face away from you.

[10:03] Your understanding was to have God looking towards you. And in thinking about this, God's plan was Jesus Christ fulfilling this prophecy, changing the course of history, giving us the opportunity to receive this free gift of salvation.

That is the reason for this season. That is why we celebrate and we talk about the Christmas story. We think of the children as they are learning from such a young age, why do we do this every single year?

The children to begin to understand who Jesus is. We think about the three wise men. We think about how they follow the star. That's kind of an incredible thing.

Following the star and knowing that here is Jesus being born, offering frankincense and myrrh. It's just a wonderful story, not only for children, but for us as adults.

And let us be reminded that in this love, it's not about what we can do, it's about what has been done for me. That is what we celebrate in this Christmas season.

[11:15] And the third thing is our response to God's love is to love. Let us love one another, which as God has loved us. And just as the angels saying that song of praise, glory to God in the highest, our response should be in a similar manner.

If the heavens declare glory to God, why can't we? If the animals and all the nature seems in glory, why can't we?

That's kind of a heavy reminder, but it's true. Knowing that everything that was created was made with intentionality and divine purpose, we too, in the same way as the angels proclaimed, and saying glory, we too should respond.

The angels praise, it shows us the heavenly response to God's love, and our earthly response should mirror this, to live and to love, much like how the Lord has.

Going to that next slide then, we think, well, what can we learn from this? There's three things that we can learn from this. The first thing is knowing that God's love begins with Christ.

[12:36] As I have mentioned, let us love in response to his love for us. As I have mentioned, Christ being born in the manger, the time for us to remember the beginning of what would be the fulfillment of even more prophecies.

I'm reminded of Romans 5 verse 8 which says, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And knowing that, for some of us, we may dwell so much on our past mistakes, our blunders, our sins that we have made.

But let us remember, Christ still was born in that manger for us. Living, dying, being buried, and raising again for the dead is wonderful.

The second thing is God's love is shown in Christ. His birth, as I've mentioned, is life, is ministry, is death.

This is the ultimate act of love. And when we think of that word, or appreciation, this teaches us the abundance of God's love. And we think of all of this as the mystery that was hidden by God being revealed for us to see, to learn, and to respond to.

[14:08] It teaches us the abundance of God's love, that Jesus bringing peace between God and humanity. And as I mentioned, the Jewish understanding of being separated from the Lord, now we have the opportunity for us to be restored unto God, to be connected once again to Him.

Second Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 tells us then, For our sake, He made Him to be sin who do no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

We then go to that third one, which is God's love is to be shown through us. Do you see how powerful it is, the love and the abundance of God, the revelation of the mystery being revealed to the church to us, that we are a share of that love, to speak of that revelation to others.

It's to continue to flow through to other people. How many of you, somebody who spoke to you about the gospel story, when you were young, or maybe when you were middle age, or even when you were older, hearing that story, how did you respond?

Maybe it was a few times, maybe it was more than it should have been. Maybe it was the first time. Think about that.

[15:47] We think of that when in John chapter 13 verses 34, where Jesus says, A new commandment I give you, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you are to love one another.

Let the love of God, the grace that comes from Him. When we've talked about the advent of the fiends, the hope that exists in Christ, the peace that surpasses all understanding, the unspeakable and exhaustible joy that comes from all of these things they come to us, that they should flow through us as well to other people.

And that's how people know that we are Christian, they know that we are different. Many of us have met people before, we haven't. You're Christian.

I do it, right? You probably have those moments before. Normally we go into the application, but what do we do with this?

We observe the text, we learn the lessons from it, you can see there's some clear patterns here. We talk about that. For many of us, we read the Bible and we learn from Scripture.

[17:03] But in learning, we're called out to go out and live it out. Because God calls us to be active in our faith. Let us have an active faith, much like how we know that our God is alive and well and working.

The word of God being living and active. Let us be alive in Christ and active in His faith. So how should we respond?

We have the three things here. To love sacrificially. It says love forgivingly and love compassionately. We're to love God and to love others.

And here's a difficult one, without expecting things in return. I know for a lot of us who like to do things, we're like, alright, can I have something back too? We are a human nature.

We're to love the Lord with all of our heart and we're to share in the love of Christ with other people. And part of that love is sharing in that mystery, being revealed, the mystery of Christ, the revelation of Him.

[18:13] John chapter 15 verse 13, greater love has no one than this that someone lay down in his life for his friends. The second one is love forgivingly.

To be quick to forgive, just as God has forgiven you, that's a difficult one. We are to share in that love this idea of forgiveness, forgiving others.

I know it's so easy for us to hold grudge against someone, isn't it? So much easier. But to forgive others, much as we are forgiven, it's a challenge.

But it's something that we are all called to do. And I admit, look, I'm not perfect either. I'd rather not forgive, but in the forgiveness there is that.

It's like that weight off of your shoulders in knowing that. Be quick to forgive. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 32 tells us, be kind to one another, be tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God and Christ forgive you.

[19:20] That's exhibiting this. And the third one is to love compassionately, to show kindness even when it's undeserved. When someone does us wrong, are we like Scrooge?

I mean, if you've seen movie Scrooge, right? I know, sometimes I do. But when we think of Scrooge, we have to think, well, can't he be a little more compassionate?

At least before he ends, okay? Colossians chapter 3 verse 12 tells us, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, weakness and patience.

Isn't that part of loving others? Caesar said then done, but in us being a new creation, in us knowing the Lord and being saved by grace through faith and receiving this gift, of course we should put on the new self and exhibit this love to others.

And I want to ask you, as we begin to close for today, ask yourself this question. Who in your life needs to experience God's love?

[20:46] Who needs to hear the story of God's revelation in Jesus Christ being born in Asia? And how can you exhibit the love of Christ to someone you know?

Maybe it's a friend, maybe it's a family member, maybe it's just being present in your everyday interactions.

We all live everyday lives, don't we? I mean, I hope that we all talk to people or at least see people throughout the day. I know some of us like to be issuers and like to hang out alone, but it's still dealing with people.

How can you share in the light, love and truth of Jesus Christ with other people? Especially in a time such as this, especially in the Christmas season.

Isn't this an opportunity for you to not only think of Jesus Christ being born in Asia, but how you have responded to God's call for your life?

[21:50] How can you share in that with other people? When we look at this verse and we think of the call for us to love much as God has loved, to us let us think of the greatest gift, of you to seek that gift.

Just know that every single day, every moment is an opportunity for you to respond to the invitation that God has for you to be saved.

And part of this whole story of Jesus Christ is knowing that the Word became flesh, that Christ being born in India, humble begins, such humble begins.

Let us think of how God sent his Son for us, that whosoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.

So ask yourself that question, who in your life needs to experience God's love? Who can you talk to and share in a story?

[23:06] Christmas is about the greatest gift, God's love being revealed in Jesus Christ. This is a time for celebration.

It's a time when we think of children, we think of our own children. We think of the presents that are by the Christmas tree. We think of the stocking stuffers, right?

And there's that sense of excitement that children have on Christmas morning, about the gifts that they have received. I mean, you were all children once, you all received a gift, if you haven't come talk to me, I'll get you one.

We've all received gifts before, right? The excitement that we have in receiving a gift is something that is very special to us as when we are children, it's the most exciting thing.

And us as parents, when we see our own children opening presents and having that sense of excitement, so too can we think of the great gift that God our Father gives to us.

[24:11] Just as we've talked about in previous weeks with the parables, even the angels in heaven, even God the Father himself celebrates, if someone comes to know the Lord, so too should we celebrate when someone becomes a believer.

And so too should there be excitement in receiving the gift I'd seen somewhere. Also, respond to that invitation. In all of this, let us remember, not only is this love something that we receive, the greatest gift from God, but it's also something that we share.

We say, look, I am saved by Jesus Christ. I'm saved because of Him. That's why we share in the Good News.

And so with that, let's close in prayer together. Father, we thank you for this opportunity for us to go over these couple of verses, realizing that how things are connected.

May we realize that the revelation of the mystery is through Jesus Christ being born in a manger, being born in Bethlehem.

[25:38] How wonderful your ways are that you fulfill your prophecy and your promises. I pray that even though we may get busy in our everyday life, that we can focus and fixate our minds and our hearts on you, and the greatest gift that you give to us in Jesus Christ.

We are saying these songs away in a manger. We three kings, we're saying all of these Christmas songs to remind us of the Christmas story.

How wonderful it is to know who you are, to know your son Jesus, and to respond to this gift that you give to us of salvation.

And I pray, Father, if there's anyone who hasn't received the gift, to stir their hearts. And for those of us who have received the gift, let us grow in you and share this gift.

Speaking of who you are, speaking of your son Jesus to others, may we be that white, may we mirror that love, that peace, that joy, and that hope that comes from you.

[26:59] Because through the revelation of Jesus Christ comes that peace.
And we recognize the love that you have for us.

Be with us as we sing this last song, Joy to the World. And be with us as we come together and
fellowship as we have a meal together.

We love you, we praise you, we glorify you, and we honor you. You are the reason for this season.
It is in Jesus' name. God bless you all day.