



**Sermon Series:** Looking Forward to Christmas

**To be used with** Session 4: Looking Forward to Love

**Sermon Title Possibilities:** “There’s Nothing Better Than Love!”

**Scripture:** John 1:14-18; 3:14-18

**Connection To Unit Theme:** Has anyone ever accused you of not loving them because they didn’t like their Christmas gift? Or maybe you couldn’t afford to get them anything, and they accused you of not caring about them. As frustrating as this can be, the reality is that there are some people that solely measure one’s love for them by what that person buys them. In their mind, the only expression of love is spending money. While there is nothing wrong with enjoying gifts or even desiring them, it is dangerous to minimize something as powerful as love to something as shallow as material things. Love is so much more than that. As we journey through this Christmas season, let’s not forget that just because someone gives us material things, doesn’t mean that they love us. Material possessions are not the only barometer by which love should be measured.

**Introduction:** The title of this series is taken from the 1986 duet by the late musical legends Luther Vandross and Gregory Hines. While the song refers to the romantic love between a husband and wife, the sentiment is of paramount importance. There is truly nothing better than love. There’s nothing more powerful than love. And the feeling of having love for someone else is sometimes just as (if not more) rewarding than knowing we’re loved ourselves. As we examine our text in John, we will discover the lengths to which God has gone to express His love to each of us. God’s love for us extends far beyond a romantic love, but it’s a love that looks past our flaws, our mistakes, and our deliberate bad choices, and still chooses to give us a chance. There is truly nothing better than love...specifically God’s love!

### 1. John 1:14-15 - “Love Personified!”

If any of us were asked what love looks like, we’d likely describe a variety of actions and personality traits. Some might say selflessness, while might say patience. Some might say generosity, while others might say kindness and gentleness. Some might say being a good listener, while others might say just being present, but whatever the case may be, all of us have at least some idea of what we think love is. However, the Gospel of John presents us a clear picture of someone who not only has the attributes, but He Himself fully embodies everything that love is.

John 1 has words from John the Baptist, who had already provided something of a preview in preparation for Jesus, and he is now giving his audience a prelude to the greatness that is now present with them. When verse 14 tells us that, “*The Word became flesh...*,” this is John’s way of putting a body on both God’s Word, as well as God’s love. Jesus would come to embody the breadth of God’s love for us, as well as what He expects to see from us as His children in our interactions with others. It’s one thing to know someone who has a few qualities predicated by

love, but it's another when you know someone who's entire existence is centered around love. That's Jesus. And we'd do well to get to know Him as quickly as possible. Can't nobody love us like Him.

## **2. John 1:16-18 - "An Amazing Gift That Money Can't Buy!"**

Anyone who has spent any time in the church should at least be familiar with those twins known as Grace and Mercy. Grace being when God gives us what we don't deserve, and Mercy being God not giving us what we actually deserve. While the average person would likely name a material thing or an amount of money if asked what they would want. However, there is something that is way more valuable than any of those things. Fact about it, it can't be bought or earned. God just gives it out if the abundance of love He has for us in His heart.

Verses 16-18 of John 1 tells us that even though Moses gave us the law, Jesus provided us with grace and the opportunity to do better. Had it not been for Jesus, we would all be doomed to an eternal hell with no hope of escape. Again, while there's nothing wrong with desiring or enjoying material things, there's nothing in any store that can do for us what God's grace can. And the fact that He sent His son to extend us that Grace personally is even more amazing.

## **John 3:14-18 - "Reckless Love!"**

"Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God! Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine! I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, you give yourself away! Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God!" Cory Asbury produced this beautiful worship song in 2017, and it effortlessly encapsulates our text in John 3:14-18. It is a beautiful illustration of the extent to which God will go to ensure that we are okay. God easily could've left us to our own devices, but His love for us is so deep and so intense that He refused to leave us hanging. The text makes clear that God's motivation was not to condemn but provide the opportunity for all of us to be saved. Not only that, but this is a love that pursues us. A love that doesn't just wait for us to come to Him, but a love that doesn't mind coming after us. A love that will give us His Undivided Attention and ensure that we are in a right relationship with Him. There's nothing that any of us can do to earn it, nor do we deserve it under any circumstances. It is truly a gift given from a place of genuine love, care, and generosity. You can't get any better than that.

## **Conclusion**

Have you ever received a gift and said to the person giving it something like, "WOW! This is too much! I can't accept this." If so, the person more than likely insisted that you accepted it and assured you that they truly wanted to give it to you. That's an illustration as to how God's love is toward us. We can't earn it. We don't deserve it. We can't repay it, and we certainly can't match it. And yet God, knowing it, chooses to extend it to us anyway. We may feel unworthy, undeserving, and unqualified, but God doesn't see us that way. God doesn't just see our right now, but He sees our future and our potential. And He loves us so much that He won't withhold an opportunity for us to reach that future. We have a part to play in this, but God always takes the first step. With a love and care of this magnitude, there is truly nothing better than the love of our God!

**Author Bio**

Joseph T. Howard, Sr., M.Div. is an ordained Minister of the Gospel residing and primarily serving in Atlanta, GA. He is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Joseph is married to the love of his life and a powerful minister in her own right, Bianca Robinson Howard, and together they have two children: Rose Victoria & Joseph, Jr.