

FBC Service Advent 4 Sunday December 24 1 John 4:7-11 Love Came Down at Christmas

“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

8 But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

11 Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.”

There’s nothing like the love of God! It’s the most overwhelming thing I have ever encountered in my life. It’s the greatest thing God ever did for any of us!

The Bible has many stories about human love and the Christmas story brings before us,

1) Joseph’s love for Mary,

2) Mary’s love for Jesus

And here in 1 John 4, God’s love for sinful man, and an exhortation to love one another.

There would be no Christmas without love, and all four of these are integral parts of the Christmas story.

John is the great book of love. The NIV mentions love at least 34 times in 133 verses. It was written to combat a heresy among people who felt that they had a special knowledge of God and His ways. John is writing to put them into their place!

And as he does, he tells the rest of us about a great God with a great love for great sinners. It's that great love of that Great God that I want to speak about this morning.

May the Lord touch our hearts as we consider the tremendous truth that Love Came Down at Christmas.

How good it is to once again have the privilege of meeting together as the family of God on this Christmas Eve morning, to celebrate the birth of Christ.

We’ve been celebrating all month long, but now the time has arrived. We remember Joseph and Mary and their long trek to Bethlehem.

We remember the shepherds in the field and the angels in the sky. We remember the baby in the manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. We remember the star in the sky and the wise men worshipping Jesus and presenting him with gifts.

Christmas is a wonderful story, but it’s so much more than a story.

It's a true story, it's history, and it's our story, the story of when love came down in the person of Jesus Christ. I would like to share with you some simple truths from our Scripture passage of how love came down at Christmas.

We could summarize them this way.

1) Love comes from God.

2) Love came down to earth.

3) Love came down to the cross.

First of all, love comes from God. Look at verses 7-8: *“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”*

Did you ever wonder where love comes from? When you see the love between a man and his wife, where does that come from? Or the love between a parent and a child? Or the love between family or good friends?

At Christmas time there seems to be an extra measure of love around as people give to each other and especially to those in need.

Most people agree that love is the most beautiful thing in the world. But where does all this love come from? The Bible gives us the answer. **Love comes from God, because God is love.**

There has never been a time when there was not God, and so there has never been a time when there was not love. The Bible begins with these four words in the book of Genesis: *“In the beginning God.”*

God is love, and so we could also say, “In the beginning love ...”

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning love spun a universe across the stretches of time. **Love comes from God.**

Love has always existed from the very beginning. Even before the world was created, there was love. Jesus prayed in John 17:24: *“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”*

Love has always existed because God has always existed, and God is love.

But God not only loved Jesus before creation; He also looked forward in time and loved us.

That's our first truth this morning. **Love comes from God.**

Our second truth is this: love came down to earth. Look at 1 John 4:9: *“God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.”*

God created us because He loves us and wants to have a relationship with us. But after God created us, our sins shattered our relationship with Him.

But that didn't stop God's love. Love began in heaven, but love came down to earth at Christmas. God sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

The miracle of Christmas is that the baby in the manger was God in human flesh. God became a man. The Son of God became the son of man and entered our world on Christmas day.

He left the glories of heaven and came to earth as a tiny baby. This is how God showed his love among us:

Love comes from God. That's our first truth. Love came down to earth. That's our second truth. **And love came down to the cross is our third truth.**

1 John 4:10: *"This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins."*

What powerful words. *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."* **This is a truly wonderful statement.** It's the epitome of the Gospel message. If you understand this sentence . . . you understand the message of the gospel.

God loves us so much that he not only sent Jesus to earth, **but He also sent him to the cross at Calvary.**

Jesus travelled a great distance when he came down from heaven to earth. **But he travelled an even greater distance when he went to the cross.**

Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus *"Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being."*

When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8)

This was God's plan all along. It's part of the Christmas story.

Jesus lived his entire life in the shadow of the cross. Love not only came down to earth at Christmas. Love came down to the cross to pay the price for our sins so that we could be saved. As the angel said to the shepherds that first Christmas Eve:

"Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11) This was the true gift of Christmas. **Not simply the gift of a Son, but the gift of a Saviour.** *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*

God's Love Was Demonstrated at Calvary

Love came down all the way to the cross.

God's love can never be fully understood, but it can be seen, and it's best seen at the cross!

The Christmas story is all about love. Joseph's love for Mary and Mary's love for Jesus are both important parts of that story, but they are not the most important.

The central message of love at Christmas is God's love for sinners.

This is evident from the angel's words to Joseph about Mary in Matthew 1: *"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

Why was Jesus born into our world at Christmas? **It's all in his name!** The name Jesus means "Saviour" or "salvation," and Jesus was born into our world to save his people from their sins.

We read in John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

The greatest gift ever given at Christmas was the gift of God's own Son.

God gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life. Jesus did not merely come into the world. **He was sent into the world.**

If you ever doubt that God loves you, just look at His Son, Jesus.

Look at Jesus the child born into the world as a baby at Christmas.

Look at Jesus the man, teaching the people, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing disease and sickness among the people.

Look at Jesus the Saviour, suffering and dying on the cross for your sins to bring you to God.

Look at Jesus the King, risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, coming back to take us to be with him that we may be where he is forever.

Nothing can ever separate us from God's love in Christ. (Romans 8:38-39)

As Paul writes in Romans 8: *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The Christmas story is all about love, but the most important part of the story is God's love for sinners.

The death of Jesus is the final proof of God's love. Sometimes in this crazy, mixed-up world, people say, "Where is the love of God?" We see so much killing, so much heartache, so much tragedy, so much pain, so much anger. Where is the love of God? And to that I say.

Look to the cross. Gaze upon the bleeding form of the Son of God. **There you will see the love of God.**

See from his head, his hands, his feet.

Sorrow and love flow mingled down.

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown? **(Isaac Watts)**

Someone has said, "Lord, how much do you love me?" "**This much," he said.** Then he stretched out his arms, bowed his head, and died.

Song: The Love of God. Frederick M Lehman 1917.

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.

Then comes the famous chorus, beautiful in its majestic simplicity:

O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure, the saints and angels song.

How great, how vast, how amazing, is the love of God described in verses 7-11.

It's Unspeakable - I can't understand it, or why, but I know I have experienced it and I can never be separated from it - Rom. 8:38-39

It's Unending - Jer. 31:3...I have loved you with an everlasting love! God's love is eternal!

It's Unselfish - It asks for nothing in return! However, it leads man to repent and turn to God in love. We love him because He first loved us!

It's Unmerited - Cannot be earned or deserved.

It's Unconditional - It's not based on what we can or cannot produce, it comes from the heart of God. Man can never reach a place when he will not be loved by God! God loved us first, He loved us anyway and He loves us eternally!

It's Supernatural, it's Sacrificing, it's Satisfying!

We've looked at Joseph's love for Mary, Mary's love for Jesus, and God's love for sinners. But there's one more aspect of love at Christmas that we don't want to leave out. **And that is our love for one another.**

The Bible makes a clear and unbreakable connection between God's love for us and our love for each other.

Notice God's love always comes first. God's love in creating the world; God's love in promising a Saviour; God's love in sending his Son into the world; God's love in Jesus dying on the cross for our sins.

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

God's love always comes first. But then our love should follow. *“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* (1 John 4:11)

Our love for others should follow, not merely as an obligation, but as a natural outflow of God's love for us.

If God loved us so much that He sent his Son Jesus to die for us, how can we not love others in return?

And if God loved others so much that he sent his Son Jesus to die for them, how can we not love them as well?

When the love of God is present in the life of a believer, it will clearly show itself in 5 different areas. 11-12.

1. God's people will have a Love for The Saviour

2. God's people will have a Love for The Scriptures

3. God's people will have a Love for His House.

David - Psalms 122:1- I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the lord!

4. God's people will have a sincere Love for the Non-Christian

5. God's people will have a genuine love for one another – 1 John 4:10-11

And so Christmas is not only a reminder of how much God loves us, but also how much we should love other people.

We don't learn to love by attending seminars, reading books, or trying harder.

We learn to love as we draw closer to God through Christ.

God showed his love for us at Christmas by sending his Son into the world as a sacrifice for our sins. How will you show your love to others this Christmas?

Is there someone you need to help this Christmas? Is there someone you need to reach out to?

Is there someone you need to forgive this Christmas?

Christmas is all about love for Love came down at Christmas.

We have now covered all four of the outside candles of the Advent wreath, but there is one more candle to go – **the Christ candle in the centre of the wreath.**

I invite you to come back to our Christmas Eve service tonight where we will see how the Christ candle reminds us that Jesus truly is the centre of Christmas, and how all true hope, peace, joy and love are found in him.

We see that “love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.”