

Advent Love



**Come, Thou Long
Expected Jesus**

Williamsburg Christian Church
Advent Study – Week 4

Advent Love – Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Love. God's love.

John 3:16 – ¹⁶For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (HCSV).

We all know this verse. It may be the first one we ever learned. We see signs at every sporting event ever televised, we recognize it on bumper stickers, etc. etc. etc. But, do we really understand what love is? I think we believe that love is a feeling we get, or sentiment for someone or something that pleases us. “Oh, isn't that lovely!” Or, “Man, I really love my new car!” But God wants us to understand it in a deeper way. Jesus tells us this:

John 13:34-35 - ³⁴I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

But, how do we love one another if we really don't understand love? I know, we could spend the next year talking about love and the distinct differences between the different types of love. What, you didn't know there were different kinds of love? According to Wikipedia, ancient Greece gives us 5 categories of love:

1. Agape – brotherly or selfless love. This is the highest form of love. It is unconditional, unexpectant, accepting, believing, forgiving, boundless compassion.
2. Eros – sexual or sensual love. Best described as romantic love for one another.
3. Philia – friendship or fondness love. A shared goodwill toward one another.
4. Storge – familial or kinship love. Best described as the love between a mother and her children.
5. Xenia – stranger or guest love. An unselfish concern for the welfare of others

But, even with all those explanations, what is it we really need to know about love and how to truly love one another? Jesus also tells us this:

John 15:9-17: - ⁹As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. ¹⁰If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love.

11 I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. 12 This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you.13 No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you slaves anymore, because a slave doesn't know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. 17 This is what I command you: Love one another.

I think this last scripture can give us the largest hint to what Jesus is really telling us. He said that He appointed us to go out and produce fruit, and our fruit should remain. Logically, then, this requires work, effort, action, and then follow through to keep whatever fruit we have produced healthy. I believe that we can only see love when we put love into action. God did the same. He sent his Son to earth as a tiny baby to show love. Jesus lived his life to set the perfect example for us as his follow through and then gave the ultimate gift of himself on a cross just to save us from ourselves. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. Or sacrifice from our abundance to give to someone's insufficiency. Or just share what we have been given with those who are struggling. Love is a verb... it requires an action.

In 1744, Charles Wesley considered...

Haggai 2:6-9 ⁶For the Lord of Hosts says this: "Once more, in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. ⁷I will shake all the nations so that the treasures of all the nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,"says the Lord of Hosts. ⁸"The silver and gold belong to Me"—this is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts. ⁹"The final glory of this house will be greater than the first," says the Lord of Hosts. "I will provide peace in this place"—this is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts.

...and looked at the situation of orphans in the areas around him. He also looked at the class divide in Great Britain. Through this train of thought, he wrote "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus" based upon Haggai 2:7 and a published prayer at the time which had the words:

"Born Your people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now Your gracious kingdom bring. By Your own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone; by Your all sufficient merit, raise us to Your glorious throne. Amen."

Wesley adapted this prayer into a hymn in 1744 and published it in his "Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord" hymnal. Wesley wrote "Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus" with the intent for people to remember Advent and Christmas as commemorating the Nativity of Jesus and preparing for the Second Coming.

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

You can see both aspects of God's love in these verses. Come: God sends His Son to earth that we may start the journey of knowing Jesus and learning to love as He loves. Then the song ends with Raise: God sending His Son once again to bring us home and live with Him forever. Both actions of love.

So, what do we need to do to love the way God loves us?

Matthew 25:35-36 - For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.

Jeremiah 29:4-8 - ⁴This is what the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles I deported from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵“Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters to men in marriage so that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there; do not decrease. ⁷Seek the welfare of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the Lord on its behalf, for when it has prosperity, you will prosper.

This doesn't look so hard. I can do these things. I don't have much, but what I have I can share. I don't have much money, but I can at least give my time. I know it's hard, but I can certainly sacrifice some of... everyone reading this knows where they fall in the support of God's kingdom. Remember that Jesus put skin on and came down, Immanuel, God with us, now we need to put some skin in the game as well.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF LOVE

As you light the candle of hope consider asking the following questions, one each night.

*What can I do to show Jesus love to the world?
What can I do to show Jesus love to our nation?
What can I do to show Jesus love to our neighborhood?
What can I do to show Jesus love to our friends?
What can I do to show Jesus love in our own lives?*

Devotional:

“God entered into our world not with the crushing impact of unbearable glory, but in the way of weakness, vulnerability and need. The world does not understand vulnerability. Neediness is rejected as incompetence and compassion is dismissed as unprofitable. But in this weakness and poverty the shipwrecked at the stable would come to know the love of God.”¹

PRAYER

Father, as we prepare our hearts and our minds for the celebration of your Son’s birth, give us the love that is expected of your people. Give us the desire to wait for You and to know Your love for us. Allow us to share that love and joy with those You seek to redeem and to see them as you do, as children loved and scooped up into the arms of Jesus ready to celebrate another birthday here on this earth. Thank you for grace and mercy in Christ’s name, Amen.

Sources Utilized:

https://hymnary.org/text/come_thou_long_expected_jesus_born_to

Advent – New Life Fellowship, New York City, Pastor Rich Villodas

¹ **Brennan Manning** - Richard Francis Xavier Manning, known as Brennan Manning was an American author, laicized priest, and public speaker. He is best known for his bestselling book *The Ragamuffin Gospel*.