

Sermon Advent 4 12/20/17 I John 4:7-11 Wrap in Love

Dear Beloved:

In the Gospel of Luke 1:26ff the angel Gabriel appears to the virgin Mary with some pretty incredible news. This portion of Luke is called the Annunciation.

- God sends the angel Gabriel to Mary
- Mary has been chosen to be the one who will carry and give birth to the Messiah

But, first the angel Gabriel must explain things to Mary.

- This will not be an ordinary man
- This child is to be named Jesus and will be called the “Son of the Most High”
- He will save his people from their sins
- He will reign forever for his kingdom will never end

Mary is puzzled over all of this.

- How can she be giving birth to anyone for she is a virgin?
- She had to be wondering what God’s messenger was talking about?
- How can the child she will give birth to be called Son of the Most High?
- How can this child reign forever for only God can reign forever?

It is at this point that Gabriel explains.

- This is all a God thing
- The Holy Spirit will “overshadow” you, Mary.
- The image here is one of being “totally covered or enveloped” in the love of God.

This God who so loved the world gives us his Son as Isaiah says:

“Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given.” Isaiah 9

Mary is chosen to be part of this “giving of love” in a way that was never seen before, nor will be seen again.

The Son of the Most High and child of the Virgin Mary will be God’s testament of love for all the world --- a fallen world in need of a Savior.

When you look at I John 4 we are told that God is love himself.

- He is love’s substance
- He is love’s essence
- To give birth to God’s Son is to give birth to Love himself

According to John’s words here if we are connected to God who showed his love by sending his one and only Son into the world, we too, will love as he is love.

- We love because he first loved us
- The love we give expression to is not found in pretty wrapped gifts, but in our love of God and for others through Christ.

Wrapped presents are good, but wrapping others in love is better and sharing the love of God is the best.

In the art of wrapping gifts, people who are precise can leave those gifts looking beautiful and professionally done.

- But what happens when you have a gift that is not easy to package or wrap?
- In a way this is exactly the kind of gift Christmas brings us.
- The love of God is far too big and far too hard to wrap our minds around.
- It is a love beyond measure, so if we think we can easily box it, wrap it and put a bow on it, then we shortchange it.

We wrap gifts as an expression of love, but how much more important it is to wrap someone in love?

- It may be that hug when no words can express or take away that hurt or grief some is experiencing.
- It may be that well timed word of affirmation or encouragement.
- It may be expressed in time together when loneliness becomes unbearable.
- There are so many ways to wrap another in love, but in all of them, Christ is living in and through us.

What does John say about love?

- God is love, love is not God. V7 “Let us love one another for love comes from God.”
- Love does not define God, but God defines love
- God defines love as...
 - Unconditional
 - Selfless
 - Sacrificial

Lamentations 3:22-23 “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.”

- The next time we are overwhelmed with guilt remember the Lord’s great love
- The next time we can’t forget some past sin remember the Lord’s great love
- The next time we feel weak and alone remember the Lord’s great compassion

The Apostle Paul says:

“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” Romans 5:5

We love God and others because...

- God loved us first I Jn 4:19
- We have been “born again” of God

Love is an essential attribute or character trait of God. This love is the love that sent Jesus into the world. I John 4:9-11

God's love is Agape

- It sent Jesus to us
- It cares for us
- It responds to our needs
- It forgives us
- It offers patience
- It gives kindness

Jesus came to die on the cross that...

- We might live through him
- We might live for him
- We might live with him

John says in v10 that Jesus is the “atoning sacrifice” for our sins. Jesus is our Mercy Seat.

- The Mercy Seat in the Old Testament was that on which the blood of animals was splattered on in the Holy of Holies of the temple.
- The blood of animals pointed to the blood of Jesus on the cross which satisfied God's holy law which sinful mankind broke.

Are we broken, Jesus was broken, like bread for us. Are we despised, He was despised and rejected of men.

Do we cry out that we can't take it anymore, He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Do people betray us, He was sold out himself.

Do people turn from us, they hid their faces from him as from a leper.

“No matter how deep our darkness, Jesus is still deeper still.”

Corrie ten Boom

John writes: **“Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” V11**

After the angel Gabriel visited Mary with the news that she would give birth to Jesus, she goes on to talk about how God blesses and loves the lowly and the humble, the poor and the downtrodden.

- People like you and me spiritually.
- People all around us who need God's love
- We love because He first loved us.