

LOVE The Second Sunday of Advent

I John 4:7-21

Our theme, on this the second Sunday of Advent, is love. Webster defines love as strong affection and warm attachment. I would like to suggest that the kind of love that John is writing about is much more than a sentimental feeling or attachment—it is more than warm and fuzzy. John is writing about a concrete, visible love; the kind of love that is revealed in action more than word.

Your boyfriend says, “I love you.” And then beats you up! Your girlfriend says, “I love you.” And then takes your credit cards and max’s them out. Your friend says, “I love you.” But when you are sick and need them they are too busy to help. My friends, anybody can say the words, “I love you.” John is not writing about saying the words; he is writing about living the words. Verse 10, *“In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent God’s own child to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.”*

God’s love was made known through action, through the sending of God’s child Jesus, through the death of God’s child on the cross. God’s kind of love is sacrificial. God’s kind of love does something! God’s kind of love forgives; notice, John writes that the sacrifice was because of sin—that which can hinder a relationship. Because of God’s love he took action through the cross to bring healing to relationship. God is not going to permit sin to stand in the way of relationship with His beloved. And John makes it clear that we also are not to allow sin to stand in the way of our relationship with each other.

Friends, God loves us even with all of our contradictions. God loves us even with all of our broken promises. God loves us even with all of the traits that make us difficult to love. And as hard as it is for us to do John writes that we are to love each other in the same way that God loves us—even in the face of broken promises, contradictions and peculiar traits that make love difficult. God loves us sacrificially and so are we to love each other.

When you come across that person who makes it difficult to love consider these words: **They drew a circle that shut me out. But love and I had the wit to win; we drew a circle that took them in.** Friends, the cross is the circle that God has drawn to take us all in!

John makes it clear that the evidence of our love for God is not found in our loving God but rather in our loving each other. The evidence of our love for God is not found in how much scripture we can quote, or in how many times a day we pray, or whether we attend worship every Sunday; the evidence of our love for God is found when we go to the bedside of a hurting brother or sister, the

evidence of our love for God is found when we forgive a brother or a sister for a wrong they have done to us, the evidence of our love for God is found when we share our worldly possessions with a brother or sister who is struggling to get by. And further, the evidence of our love for God is found in our having a consuming passion for the well being of others. Just as the cross is a channel of God's passionate love so are we to be a channel of God's love.

Read I Corinthians 13:1-8a, 13

Read modern advent paraphrase of I Corinthians 13.