

- Review: we have been doing the Advent together this year. If you are not familiar with Advent please take time today to see the notes and/or podcast on line. The first Sunday of Advent we lit the Prophecy Candle or the Candle of Hope. The second Sunday we lit the Bethlehem candle or the candle of preparation and peace. Last Sunday we lit the Shepherds candle the candle of joy. Today we light the Angel candle or the candle of love.
- The significance of this candle is that God 'came down' from heaven as Messiah, Jesus. So we celebrate the Christmas season knowing that God loves us so much that He would send His son to be born in a manger in Bethlehem. God is Love! \*\*Ted and Linda Empson to light the candle.
- I recently read a story ... about a traveler who was having a conversation with a farmer from upstate New York. They both were discussing the weather, and the farmer assured the traveler ...that he could tell what the weather was going to be ... by watching the behavior ... of his cows. "When the cows are standing, ... that means ... no rain ...for the next 24 hours. When they are lying down, ... Well that means it is going to rain." The traveler asked, ... "What does it mean when half the herd is standing ... and the rest are lying down?" The farmer smiled and replied, "That means that half of them are wrong!"
- Predicting the weather... and predicting the future ... is as old as mankind. Today I am going to give you something that is 100% accurate and true. God is love. God loves you. And God wants you to love others!
- "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. 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. 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. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other." (1 John 4:7-11, NLT)

## I. God Is Love

- When John writes: God is love. vs 8 He is describing what the nature of God is.
  - The nature of something is the essential qualities or characteristics by which something is recognized. I.e. It is the nature of a tornado to destroy. It is the nature of fire to burn. It is the nature of a lion to kill. Some people are described this way: It is his nature to help people. It is his nature to fight. It is her nature to argue. It her nature to nurture.
  - God's nature is to love. This means that God eternally gives of himself to others. *"This definition understands love as self-giving for the benefit of others. This attribute of God shows that it is part of his nature to give of himself in order to bring about blessing or good for others."* Excerpt From: Wayne Grudem. "Systematic Theology." iBooks. God is love. That is who He is.
- The nature of God (to love) was this way before the world began. *"Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!"* (John 17:24, NLT)

1. God was giving before the beginning began. God gave the Son glory because he loved. God is love and it is His nature to give of himself for the benefit of others.
  2. Continued into the present: *"The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands."* (John 3:35, NLT) Again because of love the Father is giving.
  3. One of the things that many people do at Christmas is give gifts. When we give gifts we are supposed to be giving because we love. When Christmas revolves around love, giving becomes a natural by product. When life revolves around love, giving become a natural by product of love.
- C. Because God is love (it is His nature) He could not help but to love us. He could not help but give to us to help us. It is who He is. God is love so God gave. *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16, NLT) Also 1 John 4:9
1. Jesus is the revelation of God's love. It magnified in the cross. God's love went beyond the stable.
  2. God loves us so much that he gave us the greatest gift of all...the gift of His Son.
  3. This is why the Advent is so important to us. Remember: The Advent means the arrival of. So many of the scriptures we read the last three weeks were telling the story of His arrival. Love came down! Angels, shepherds, wisemen, Joseph, Mary, Simeon, Anna, Zacharias ... were all part of the story of His God's arrival!
  4. Why was it such a big story? Because God was loving by giving His son to us. That who so ever would receive Him would live and not die.

## II. God, in Loving Says He Knows You And You Are Important

- A. Watch this: *"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."* (Luke 2:11, NKJV) I like how the NKJV reads *"For there is born to you."*
1. To you! Hey Shepherd! God has a gift for you! Yes, Messiah! Your Savior!
  2. Simeon, a righteous and devout man in Jerusalem, says in Luke 2, *"I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people."* (Luke 2:30-31, NLT)
    - a) God has prepared a gift. His Son.
    - b) It is a gift for all people. All means all.
    - c) It is given because God is love. It is his nature to love you. He does not care what you have done, or what you are like right now. It is His nature to love you just as you are.
  3. So one way God defines love is in the act of giving. However, what God gave (or should we say, "who" God gave) was not a mere gift-wrapped present; God sacrificed His only Son so that we, who put our faith in His Son, will not spend eternity separated from Him. This is an amazing love, because we are the ones who choose to reject God, yet it's God who mends the separation through His intense personal sacrifice, and all we have to do is accept His gift.
- B. God loves you on purpose. He didn't get stuck with you - He chose you! He intentionally loved you so much that He gave the gift of His Son. *"God is love. He didn't need us. But he wanted us. And that is the most amazing thing."* ~ Rick Warren

1. He knows you. He doesn't just know of you. He knows you.
  2. He knows you by name. Another reason we find our identity when we receive His love.
  3. He knows all about you...and still He loved!
  4. Many struggle with the fact that God loves us in spite of our current spiritual condition. Think about this verse: *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:23, NLT) A wage is what we have earned, it is what we deserve. We have been taught to think in terms of wages not of gifts. Because of that, we often think that we do not deserve God's love.
  5. Think on this. God loved and gave even while we were a mess. That is an unconditional love!
- C. Love gives value - it does not take away value.
1. When you know God loves you, you feel valuable, accepted and that you have a purpose.
  2. Love does that. Love is intentionally self giving to others for no other reason than that is the nature of love... that is the nature of God. God is love! So love gives.
  3. One the biggest struggles of humanity is the sense of loneliness and having no value. God is loving us takes care of both. When someone gives of themselves to others they are loving. God gave of himself to us because we were worth saving! That gives me value.

### III. Because He Loves Relationship is His Desire

- A. God wants relationship with us. *"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. 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."* (1 John 4:9-10, NLT)
1. *"It is one of the most amazing facts in all Scripture that just as God's love involves his giving of himself to make us happy, so we can in return give of ourselves and actually bring joy to God's heart."* Excerpt From: Wayne Grudem. "Systematic Theology." iBooks.
  2. God gave the gift of His Son so that who so ever would receive Him would have their sins taken away from them.
  3. With the removal of sin comes eternal life through the Gift!
  4. This marks the start of a relationship.
- B. Immanuel - God with us. *""Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.' ""* (Matthew 1:23, NLT)
1. When God remains with you, you are in a relationship.
  2. When God remains with you, you are not alone.
  3. This is the basis of covenant. It is not good that man should be alone, but in relationship with one who is committed to them in love. Heb. 13:5 says, "I will never leave or forsake you." Those words demonstrate commitment to relationship.
- C. He does not love based upon performance. This is another powerful revelation of His love.
1. God's love is personal. He knows each of us individually and loves us personally. His is a mighty love that has no beginning and no end. It is this experiencing of God's love that

distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. Why does God love us? It is because of who He is: "God is love."

2. God does not love us because we are lovable or because we deserve His love. *"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."* (Romans 5:8, NLT)
3. If God would do this while we were sinners....how much more now that we are His children. You cannot out love God. It is the nature of God. God is love.
4. This fourth candle of the Advent, the candle of love is all about the God who loved and the people who received that love.

#### IV. God Wants Us To Love Others

- A. *"Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other."* (1 John 4:11, NLT)
  1. Again we are back to this Advent candle, the candle of love. God wants us to enter into His kingdom and enter into His ways.
  2. He desires us to be ambassadors of His great love.
- B. To those who have received the love of God, you have also received His nature. If there is one people group on the face of the earth that demonstrates love it should be the body of Christ.
- C. Here is what this love is to look like when being expressed by believers: *"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, NLT)
- D. *"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."* (1 John 4:7, NLT)

#### Conclusion:

- The purpose of the incarnation (God becoming man) is our redemption.
- The fourth Advent candle is to help us tell and to hear how much God loves us.
- He loved so much He sent His Son to die for us.
- He loves so much you don't have to change to come to him. Change happens after you experience that love.
- If you want to grasp true joy during the Christmas season it is imperative that you catch the significance in how God showed love by giving Christ. God gave His Son and Christ came willingly—true expressions of sacrificial love.
- **"Unto you**, listen wherever and whoever you are, unto you a Savior is born." And He came in LOVE.