

Advent: Love

December 22, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message focuses on the advent of Christ's love. Thank you to Paul, Mike, Tammy and Dawn for being part of the video. The scripture reading is John 13, 33 to 35. Happy birthday this week to Tabitha, Johanne, Happy and Rebecca.

Scripture Reading

John 13:33-35 (NIV)

John 13, verses 33-35, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now. Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you, love one another, as I have loved you. So you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. Amen."

Sermon

Advent: Love

Good morning everyone. Our first Christmas Advent was hope and now today our second Christmas Advent is love. Christmas can be a challenging time for people. If a person is alone at Christmas, it can be very difficult. Yet it's also beautiful to enjoy Christmas with yourself and Jesus. See He promises us that He will always be with us and that He will never forsake us. We are never truly alone. And His love can overwhelm us if we allow Him to do so. Just imagine, and I've been doing this for the past week, you and Jesus alone together. Allow His love to overwhelm you.

In a wonderful movie, A Christmas Carol, Scrooge is a wealthy yet very lonely person. He has no time for Christmas. In fact, he calls Christmas a humbug. He criticized Christmas as a waste of time. He was lonely, but he wouldn't admit it. His love was money, and anything else was humbug. He would not admit loneliness, but he surely was lonely. He once had a lovely woman, gave her a ring and a proposal for marriage. However, he was so caught up with the love of money that an idol took his place. She knew that an idol took over his life. Money was more important than their love, especially the love they promised each other. Even today, the pursuit of money can become an idol. We don't worship idols. God has not sent idols for us. Rather, God sends Himself with us and His overwhelming love. And when we mess up, He forgives. And forgiveness is love.

So let's just spend a little bit of time today talking about love from Scripture. Love and Christmas can be overwhelmingly wonderful. Love itself. If you have a concordance and notice how many times the word "love" is found, it's truly amazing. Some 800 times the word "love" is used. So Christmas and love go hand in hand. It's a wonderful time to rekindle love. Maybe a speech about love. Maybe looking into the eyes of your loved ones. Christmas has come. Jesus has come. The Old Testament talked about this. Talked about one who would be coming. And it happened.

This is how the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. But Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public

disgrace. He had a mind to divorce her quietly. But that wasn't going to happen. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. And 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. And because of God's love, he is still forgiving us for our sins." Isn't that amazing? The amazing power of love. So just a couple of thoughts today. In Matthew 3, it says God said concerning Jesus, "This is my son whom I love." So we can say it, but can we feel it? Can we feel it? This is my son. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, whom I love. And based on that, love is everywhere in Scripture.

In Matthew 22, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength." The second commandment is, "Like and unto the first love your neighbor as yourself." I don't know if you've ever had an ugly neighbor. Apparently so. You know, one of the best things to do as we can is when Barb and I moved to another place in St. Catharines, we got to know the neighbors. A very elderly woman who lives next door to us, pretty much all alone. But Barb befriended her and there's such a lovely relationship. Although quite a few years of difference, but they're together. They share with one another. Their family comes and shares. It's all wonderful. And yet, if you're alone at Christmas, and sometimes that's the case, you're never alone. If we believe the promise of God, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you, I am always with you. What a wonderful Christmas time that is.

One of the most profound words, love is found at 1 Corinthians 13. So many of us could probably recite many of these things. But based on what we're saying today, just think about it if you will. It says this, "Love never fails." Then you have to think about that. Love never fails. True love never fails.

If I speak in human or angelic tongues, but don't have love, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. I guess a lot of preachers emphasize that. If I have the gift of prophecy, and if I can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a gift of faith to move mountains, but do not love, I am nothing. Now just think about this, what he's just said. If I speak in human or angelic tongues, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I can fathom all mysteries, if I can jump off a cliff and never land and break a note, it doesn't matter. What matters is love. The explanation, love never fails. Now there may be a person who won't receive it, but love never fails. Just think of the love of God, the love of Jesus, the love of the Holy Spirit, and you, and me. They're not separate. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, his angels, and us. Christmas is gifts, but it's the gift of love. The gift of sharing.

And it says if I speak in human or angelic tongues and I don't have love, I'm just a clanging cymbal. And if I have faith to move mountains, it doesn't mean anything. And then the explanation, where love never fails, where there are prophecies, they will cease. Where there are tongues, they will be stilled. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part, and for most of us who spend a lot of time in scripture, we know we'll never get it. We're not going to get it all. We know in part, but until when completeness comes, what in part disappears. And then a few verses later he says because here's what love does. It protects, trusts, it hopes, it perseveres. Love never fails.

Now the person that's receiving that may not get it, but it's there. The greatest of these is love. And even though all of us love certain people immensely, would give their life for that person. That's

what Jesus did. At Christmas, that's what he's done. So in Ephesians 5, "Dearly loved children walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us." Love your neighbor as yourself. That can be difficult sometimes. But most times, after a while, yeah, everything's okay. Friendliness is restored. There's a great relationship there.

In Colossians, we've heard of your faith in Jesus Christ and the love that you have for all his people. So I don't mean to be weird about it, but do we love each other? I mean, right now, do we love one another? We gather together, we come, we sing songs, beautiful hymns, we share with one another. Do we love one another? Loving our neighbor as ourself. Then in Colossians it says, "We've heard about your faith in Jesus Christ and the love that you have for all his people." That's us today. But if the spirit of God gives us power and love in self-discipline, we are most expressed in beauty.

Galatians 5, "The only thing that counts is faith, but expresses itself in love." I've never liked scriptural arguments. This may have a different opinion, but it's talked one another. If you can share with one another in love, we don't always have to agree with one another, but we can always love one another. The greatest command is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, because that's how much he loves us.

He helps us in Ephesians to say, "Be humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love." And then in Philippians, and this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in the knowledge and depth and insight. Continually, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that you have for all of us.

Then Thessalonians, Timothy brought good news about the faith and love. Christ Thessalonians, we always thank God for you continually, mentioning you in prayers. And I think that's special. Maybe at Christmas time, it highlights it, that we're missing certain people, that we love people, that we really haven't seen them for a long time, and they're away, or they're traveling or whatever, but there's this connection. There is this connection of love.

Several times Barb and I had the privilege of being over in Europe, and some of the magnificent, beautiful castles, but particularly some of the churches that were just incredible. I don't know how to explain it. I just don't. But I walk into this cathedral, Barb and I, and it just takes our breath away to notice that we're standing in a building that is centuries old, and that people have worshiped in that building, year after year after year, bombed, rebuilt. There's something that is special, and it all comes down to love. It's a beautiful, beautiful church, but it's not the church. It's what's inside that church. Here is this honoring of love that people would give themselves to this structure, years and years and years of building. And here it is, so that someone like us from Canada walk into the building, and it takes your breath away. The love of this.

See, at Christmas time, there's presents, there's gifts. It's wonderful, and it's beautiful. It's a wonderful time to share with one another, and the love for all the people that are with us, and the love of the memories that we've had. Some of our loved ones who have passed away, but we remember those special occasions, those special times. In the little book of Philemon, it says, "I hear about your love for all his people and your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

And then also in Hebrews, "God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you've helped his people." That's for all of us. That's for all of us. God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love that you have shown him as you've helped his people. And many, many, many of you have done exactly that, sharing love with others. And then James says, "Blessed are those who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test of time, they will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love him."

And then Peter says, "Though you have not seen him, you love him." That's us. We don't know what Jesus looks like, but we will. Imagine seeing him face to face. And then it says, "If anyone obeys his word, the love for God is truly complete to the lady chosen by God and to her children whom I love in the truth."

And I'll just finish up with this. This little book in the New Testament called Jude, Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James to those who have been called who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ. For centuries, that faith has been brought down.

And hardly every used when it comes to Christmas is unique. They triumph. This is first century Christians, many who've been persecuted, many who have died. But it says, "They, even though they went through all this, triumph." How? "By the blood of the lamb, the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives so much even to shrink from death." May I say with all sincerity, may our love, no matter what's happening in your life, may our love overflow at Christmas. Amen.

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