

## **To Reveal the Father's Love**

**1 John 4:7-15**

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Shall we open our Bibles to 1 John, chapter 4? I am so excited to share with you the message this morning, Christmas and the love of God. The title of my sermon this morning is that Jesus came to reveal the Father's love. We are looking at the reasons Christ came at Christmas. Number one, he came to bring us eternal life. Number two, he came to take away our sins. And number three, he came to destroy the works of the devil. And today number four, he came to reveal the Father's love. We are going to look at Christmas and the love of God. You can't talk about Christmas and not talk about God's love.

Christmas is a manifestation, a revelation of the love of God. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him would never perish but have everlasting life. And we are going to look today at the love of God and its implications. From 1 John, chapter 4, verses 7 to 15. And I want you to follow with me in your Bibles. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for your Word and we pray that as we open the scriptures today that the spirit of God would open our eyes and our ears and our hearts, and I thank you for this precious time to gather together and to worship you at Christmas. And, Lord, Christmas is special time to celebrate your coming into this world to demonstrate, to display in a concrete way the love of God the Father for us, and your own love for us, that you came willingly and voluntarily and laid down your life for us. And Lord, we ought to also lay down our life for others. So Lord, speak today through your Word, speak through what you've spoken. Transform us by the power of your Word and by your Holy Spirit. And we'll give you thanks and we'll give you praise. We ask it in Jesus's name and everyone, agreeing, said amen.

There are three stages in every person's life, someone said. The first is you believe in Santa Claus. The second stage is you don't believe in Santa Claus. And the third stage is you are Santa Claus. Christmas is more than just Santa Claus and gifts and parties and eggnog. Christmas is a time to remember the love of God. I want you to look with me at our text this morning, verses 9 and 10. And then we'll back up and read the greater context. But look at verse 9. "And this was manifested the love of God," or demonstrated or displayed, "the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and he sent his Son to be the propitiation," or atoning sacrifice, "for our sins."

I want to talk to you today about the Christmas story and the love of God. And from this text there are three things, if you're taking notes, that I want to point out about the love of God. First of all I want you to see the love of God proclaimed, the love of God proclaimed, or the proclamation of God's love. Back up in our text to verses 7 and 8 and let's see that. John says, "Beloved, let us love one another," verse 7. Why? "For love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knows God. He," verse 8, "that loveth not knoweth not God;" and here it is, "for God is love."

John very clearly in these verses not only commands us to love one another but he gives us the basis or the foundation for which we should love one another. "For love is of God." And then he says, "For God is love." One of the most powerful statements about the very nature and the very essence of God. God is love. The Bible says in John, chapter 4, verse 24, God is spirit. And they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The Bible tells us in 1 John, chapter 1, verse 5, "God is light; and in him is no darkness at all." The Bible tells us in Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 29, "Our God is a consuming fire." That's describing the very nature, essence of God. But here we have a marvelous statement, God is love. What does John mean when he says "God is love"?

What John means is that God, to his very eternal essence and nature, is love. This is the most comprehensive of all biblical affirmations about the nature and character of God. "God is love" suggests love is such a necessary nature of God, such an integral part of his very essence, that he cannot exist without loving. Love never is or can be absent from his being. I think that's a marvelous idea. God can never be anything but loving. And in this world of sorrow, in this world of tragedy, we can rest in that marvelous truth, God is love.

With all of the heartache that we've seen in the world recently. And the danger that we could be tempted to think where could a God of love be? We can rest on this assurance, the Bible is very clear. God is love. It's impossible for God to do anything, think anything, or to act in any way contrary to his very nature or essence of love. God will never violate his own nature. And God in his very nature, God in his very essence is a God of love. God's laws are loving. God's judgments are loving. God's actions are loving. All that God does.

There may be times I don't understand God's ways, I can't comprehend what he's doing, I don't understand what God allows. This Friday morning I got a phone call from a fellow pastor, and we served together on the board of Fresh Life Church in Kalispell, Montana, and he was in tears. And he said that our good friend Pastor Levi Lusko and his wife Jenny lost her five-year-old daughter. They'd come home from a date night and she'd had an asthma attack. And she was turning blue and wasn't breathing and they dialed 911, jumped in the ambulance, took off for the hospital. By the time they got to the hospital she had died. I called Pastor Levi. You know Pastor Levi Lusko. He has preached here in our church. And we were just there a few weeks ago and been out to dinner with the family and little Lenia [phonetic]. And all I could do was weep with with him on the phone and cry. His heart is broken.

The Lord took his little five-year-old daughter home. And you wonder, "Lord, why? Why would you allow something like this?" But, and I opened my Bible to prepare for my sermon this Sunday, God is love. God is love. And all I could do was just rest on that and hang on to that and cling to that. The God is love. That all that God allows and all that God does and all that God allows in our lives, God's purposes and designs, and God's plans are loving. God knows what he's doing. Whatever you're enduring or whatever you are going through right now, God knows and God loves.

So based on this concept, John is telling us in verse 7 that we ought to love one another. Notice

that in verse 7. "Let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God." So he tells us to love one another for two reasons, love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knows God. It's an indication you are a child of God, you know God. And then in verse 8, "He that loveth not knows not God." If you don't love you you know not God, you are not a Christian, "For God is love." Now, the list could go on and on but let me mention some aspects of God's love. The Bible says God's love is great. Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 4. It speaks of the great love of God. It speaks of the great love of God. God's love is great. So great, that the Greeks had to coin a special word to describe it. The word is agape. In our English language, it's funny we have one word for love, right? And we use it for "I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches" to "I love my wife." And by the way I do love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I think someone ought to open a peanut butter and jelly sandwich shop. Just specialize in exotic peanut butter and jellies. But obviously my love for my wife is different than my love for peanut butter and jelly, it's a lot more intense, I hope.

So the Greeks have different words for love. They have eros, which is an erotic love. And phileo, we get our word Philadelphia, it's a brotherly love. It's a love that gives and receives. And then they have the word storge as our family love. And then they have the word agape, which is the divine, fervent, spiritual love, or it's a sacrificial love. It's a giving love, a self-denying love, it's love that just gives. Even when the object loved doesn't reciprocate that love it goes on giving. It's described in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. In the Bible, the New Testament.

It's used in John, chapter 3, verse 16. "For God so agape'd the world that he gave his only begotten Son. So it's a giving, sacrificial, self-denying love. That word was coined or came on the scene because of Christianity. Agape, love. So God's love is great, God's love is, secondly, infinite. It cannot be exhausted, it cannot be understood. God's infinite love. Thirdly, God's love is unchanging. The theological term for that is immutable.

James, chapter 1, verse 7 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, referring to God, comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." That's a description of God's unchangingness. So his immutability, he doesn't change. So God's good gifts, God's love comes down and it doesn't change, God is immutable. And I thank God that his love doesn't change, it's uninfluenceable. I can't do anything to make God love me more, because God just loves me perfectly. And I can't do anything to make God love me less. God's love is holy and unchanging. Fourthly, I would say God's love is gracious. Look in chapter 4, 1 John, verse 19. We won't get down this far in our study this morning but he says, "We love him," referring to God, "because he first loved us," right? We love him because he first loved us.

Why do we love God? Because he first loved us. And we only respond to God, right? We are just responding to God and God's love for us. What a blessing that is. God loved us when we were unlovely, God loved us when we were sinners, God loved us when we were in rebellion toward him. And so God's love is gracious. You know, in all the religions of the world you do something to earn or merit or deserve the favor of God. To get to heaven you must earn or work or deserve salvation. It is only Christianity, only biblical Christianity that teaches salvation by

grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, amen? That's what the Bible teaches.

Christianity teaches that we are saved by grace alone. And what is grace? It is unearned, undeserved, unmerited favor. No one gets to heaven by any merits of their own. It's the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and your faith in Christ. And by the way faith in Christ is not a work, or it's not a merit. You don't work your way to heaven by even faith or believing in Jesus. You believe in Jesus Christ, that's not a work, it's just trusting him to save you. We are saved by grace. Ephesians 2, 8 to and 9, "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." God saves you by his grace. And his love is gracious. We don't deserve the love of God. His love is eternal. Jeremiah 31, verse 3: "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." God's love is eternal. And I would say lastly, God's love is amazing. Isn't God's love amazing?

That's one of the things I like to think about at Christmas time, when I am looking at the tree and the lights, and all the gifts. Last night, I was looking at all the gifts around the tree. Which, my wife did all the shopping, she did all the wrapping, she did all the presents, I just sit there and watch her, you know. "Great job, Kristy, great job!" And isn't God's love amazing? Isn't God's love amazing? And you wonder... John Newton wrote the song Amazing Grace.

How sweet the sound

that saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now I'm found,

was blind, but now I see.

God's amazing grace, amazing love... How great is God's love. And John proclaimed the love of God.

But is there any proof that God loves me? Any manifest evidence of God's love? The answer is yes. And I want you to see that in verses 9 and 10 of our text. We see the proof of God's love. He moves from the proclamation "God is love" to the proof of God's love, verses 9 and 10. Look at 1 John, chapter 4, verses 9 and 10. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent," here's our Christmas message, "his only begotten Son," we'll explain what that means, "into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God." It's no big deal to love God, he's lovable; but the big deal is that he loved us and sent his son to be the sacrifice, the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

So the origin of love is God, but the manifestation of love is God giving his, notice in verse 9, only begotten son. Notice it in a verse 10, his son, notice in verse 14, the son. So in verse 9 you have "His only begotten Son." In verse 10 you have "His son." And in verse 14 you have "the Son." So the abstract "God is love" became concrete, "God sent his only begotten Son." Now what does the phrase or the term or title "begotten Son" mean or the word begotten mean? You

need to understand it doesn't convey the idea that Jesus was born or came into existence. Jesus is the eternal God. He preexisted Bethlehem. "In the beginning was the Word". John 1:1. He is the eternal word. And the Word was with God. He is the personal Word. And the Word was God, he is the divine Word. And the Word became flesh, he is the incarnate word.

So what does it mean when it says "he is the only begotten Son of God"? Very important you understand this concept. The concept of only begotten Son of God conveys uniqueness. It conveys uniqueness. And you don't need to go very far to understand the term unique. The word unique means one of a kind having no equal. Jesus Christ is one of a kind and has no equal. Amen?

This is why the Bible says he is to have preeminence. Not prominence. A lot of religions give Jesus prominence. And they put him on par with other religious leaders. The Bible says he is to have preeminence. You know, it's impossible to have a thought that is too exalted about Jesus. It's impossible to have a thought that is too exalted about Jesus. It's not impossible to have a thought too exalted about me. It's really easy to do that. But Jesus Christ is to have preeminence in the church. Let me share a few ways that Jesus Christ is unique.

He's the only one ever born of a virgin. No one before him and no one after him has ever been born of a virgin. Mary probably only thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen. We don't know for sure, but she was probably in her early teens. And she said to Gabriel, "How can this be, seeing I know not a man?" And the angel told her, "The power of the Highest shall come upon thee." And she submitted to the Lord and she yielded to the Lord's plan and purpose and... What a sweet young woman she must have been to say "Lord, be it unto me. I am the handmaid of the Lord." And this is scary, this is radical. Joseph isn't going to be happy about this. This is going to be difficult to explain to him, you're going to have to come to him in a dream and explain it to him. "You are going to have to help me out here Lord." "But Lord, be it unto me according to your Word." And she submitted to the God's plan. And she conceives through the power of the Holy Spirit. And there tabernacling in her womb was the Son of God. No one before and no one after, no one ever has been conceived by a virgin other than Jesus Christ. He was the God-man.

Secondly, he's unique that he lived a sinless life. He is the only one who ever lived a perfectly sinless life. Can you imagine being the parents of, raising Jesus Christ? Can you imagine a parent-teacher meeting, going to his kindergarten parent-teacher meeting? Teacher: "Your little Jesus is just so perfect!" "Well, he is the Son of God." Can you imagine his room? Must have just been immaculate. Just amazing. Raising the Son of God, he's just perfect and... never thought an evil thought, never did an evil deed, he was just perfect and the way he related to others around the family. And He grew in favor and stature and wisdom with God and man. No one has ever lived a perfectly sinless life other than Jesus Christ.

And then thirdly, he died a substitutionary death. Jesus, and only Jesus, went to the cross and died for man, the creature's, sin. And there on the cross your sin, my sin were placed upon the pure and holy sinless Son of God. When Jesus died on the cross, his death was substitutionary. That's the heart, meaning of the cross. The sins of mankind were actually placed on Jesus

Christ. The Bible says "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." So no one before had the uniqueness of Christ in that he died a substitutionary death on the cross. John says in this passage that God gave his Son, verse 10, to be the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, for our sins.

And then we also know that, fourthly, he rose victoriously from the grave. That makes Jesus unique, amen? I don't know of anybody else that has risen from the dead, conquered death. You say, "Well what about other people in the Bible that came back from the dead?" They came back from the dead in a mortal body and had to die again. Jesus came back to life in an immortal body. That's the difference. He conquered death. He conquered sin. He conquered the grave. And he rose in immortality, He conquered death and he ascended into heaven and he acceded at the right hand of God the Father and he lives right now in heaven as the savior of the world. And he can forgive your sins right now.

That's the glorious Christmas message. God sent his Son to the womb of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, he was buried, and he rose again from the dead, and he lives in heaven right now to forgive you all of your sins. And Jesus Christ is coming back. He is unique. When our little girls were young, at bedtime would often read them a little book. "How Do I Know God Loves Me? Let Me Count the Ways" was the title of this book. And in the book it used to say, we'd read it to our little girls, "I know that God loves me because he's given me a mommy and a daddy." You turn the page. "I know that God loves me because he's given me hands and feet. I can run and play." "I know that God loves me because he's given me food to eat." "I know that God loves me because he's given me a warm bed to sleep in." "I know that God loves me because he's given me a house to live in." I used to think that after I'd read that to my young girls, "But what about little kids that don't have a mommy or daddy? How do they know God loves them?" What about little kids that don't have hands or feet? What about little kids that don't have food to eat? What about little kids who don't have a bed to be tucked into at night, or a house to live in? How do they know God loves them?

When I read this verse the message came to me so clearly. This is how we know God loves us. God sent his son to die on the cross for our sins. You may not have a mom or dad, you may not have hands or feet, you may not have food to eat. But God displayed, God manifested, God demonstrated in a concrete way, in time and space, in history, once and for all his love for you in that he gave his only begotten Son, his only unique Son. He didn't send an angel, he didn't send a cherubim. He sent his only Son who gave his life upon the cross for your sins. That's how God manifested his love for you. That's the proof of God's love.

Thirdly, John, verses 11 to 15. And I want you to see this. Moves to the purpose of God's love. He proclaims God's love, he gives us a proof of God's love and then thirdly, he gives us the purpose of God's love. In verses 11 to 15. "Beloved," now he says. He puts it in shoe leather, "If God so loved us," and he does, "we ought also to," what? "Love one another." Did you know that the message of Christmas is the message that we should love another?

"Surely he taught us," we sing at Christmas. To what? Love one another. It's not just God's love

for us that we sing about at Christmas, but it's that God taught us to love one another. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another." Verse 12, "No man hath seen God at any time. But if we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know we that we dwell in him. And this is how we know, because he hath given to us his Holy Spirit. And we have seen and do testify," verse 14, "that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. And whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God."

God sent his Son to be what? The savior of the world. And how do you become saved? By confessing that Jesus is the Son of God. You believe in Jesus Christ. So the purpose of God's love is twofold. And I want you to see it from this text. Number one, to help us love one another, verses 11 to 13. And number two, to be the savior of the world. God sent his only begotten unique Son to teach us to love one another and to be the savior of the world. The gift of God's Son not only assures us of God's love for us, but lays upon us an obligation: no one who has been to the cross and seen God's immeasurable unmerited love, can go back to a life of selfishness.

Notice in the text here there are five reasons that Christians should love. The first reason, verse 7, love is of God. The second reason is in verse 8. God is love. The third reason is in verses 9, 10 and 11, because of what God did, gave his Son. And the fourth reason is in verse 12. So that others may see God in us. I want you to see that in verse 12. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us." In other words, you don't see God with the naked eye. God is spirit, you don't see God in his true essence or nature. But God can be seen in the lives of those, his children, when they practice love. That's what John is saying there. You can see God manifested in the lives of his people.

God can be seen in those who practice love. You can't see God in his essence, but you can see God in his people by the manifestation of his love through their life. And we should others because God has given to us his Holy Spirit. So God is love (note: here should be love is God) – verse 7. God is love – verse 8. Because of what God did, because others can see God in us, and because God has given to us his Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love in and through our lives. But then notice in verse 14 and 15, this is the Christmas message. "We have seen and do testify," John says, "that the Father sent the Son to be," what? "The Savior of the world." God sent his Son to be the savior of the world. You'll say, "But why isn't the world saved?"

If God sent his Son to save the whole world, why isn't the world saved? And here is the answer to that question. It's in verse 15, "Whosoever..." It's found in the word whosoever. "Shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God." Whosoever means whosoever. I studied all week to figure that one out. John 3:16 has a "whosoever" in it. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that...whosoever... Whosoever means whosoever. But you must decide to believe or not to believe. You must decide to receive or to reject God's love. God loves you. God sent in his Son to die for you. He paid the penalty for your sins. He died on the cross. He rose from the dead. He's giving you a gift. Whosoever will believe and confess and receive him as their savior will never perish but have everlasting life. Whosoever.

Surely meaneth you.

You'll say, "But I've done some horrible things." Whosoever. "I'm a really wicked, vile, wretched, bad person." Whosoever. It doesn't matter, God loves you and God will forgive you and God will give you eternal life. He's come to take away your sin. He's come to give you eternal life. He's come to destroy the works of the devil. He's come to manifest the Father's love. If you will open your heart and you will accept Christ, he will do all of this and so much more in your heart today if you will give your heart and life to Jesus Christ. Now that love and that forgiveness and that deliverance is in Christ. I want you to notice what it says there in verse 15, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God." So when you become a Christian, God is in you. This is really cool. God is in you and you are in God. The Bible talks about you're in Christ and Christ is in you. In Romans, chapter 1, verse 8 there's now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. And at the end of Romans, chapter 8 there is no separation from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. No condemnation, no separation from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

I was thinking about how they illustrate God in me and me in God. And I thought of a sponge. Aren't sponges amazing? You take a sponge and you put it in water and what happens? The water goes into the sponge and sponge goes in the water. If you've a bucket of water and you put a sponge in a bucket of water, what happens? The sponge is in the water and the water goes in the sponge. And matter of fact, it's pretty trippy. I like to trip out with a sponge in a bucket of water. I'll just sit there for a long time just tripping out with sponge and water. If you have a little bit of water in a bucket and you put a sponge in there, it goes...it just all sucks up...the water disappears, it's all in the sponge. And you put sponge out, squeeze...goes back into the bucket. You say, "Whoa, that's a trip." Sponge is real light, [INAUDIBLE 00:36:38] It's like, "Whoa..." Goes back in there. Phew, it's like trippy. Kids come out of the house, you hit them with it. It's really cool. I love sponges.

But I think, what a great illustration. It's like when you are in Christ. God is in you and you are in God. Just like the water is in the sponge and the sponge is in the water. God is in you and you are in God. What a wonderful thing to have God's love in you and you to be in God's love. What a wonderful thing. God's loving you..and you are to have God's love just filling your heart and filling your life. Safe and secure in the love of God. Filled with a love of God.

Love of God is greater far

Than tongue or pen could ever tell;

It goes beyond the farthest star,

And reaches to the lowest hell.

If you with ink the oceans fill,

And where the sky of parchment made,



And every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry.  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.  
Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your love. Immeasurable, gracious, infinite, wholly unchanging love. Sent down in the person of your Son Jesus Christ, come through the womb of the virgin Mary, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death on the cross, took our sins, rose again from the dead, and lives to save us from our sins. Lord, I pray that if there are any here today that have not surrendered their hearts to you, Lord Jesus, that they would say yes to you now. That they wouldn't run from you, that they wouldn't harden their hearts, Lord Jesus, that they would say, "God, I am sorry for my sin, I want you to be my savior. Come into my heart today, Lord Jesus, and forgive me of my sins. Cleanse me from my sins."

Jesus died on the cross to forgive you of all of your sins. And if you're here today and you say, "Pastor John, I've never really surrendered my heart to Jesus, I've never said 'Jesus, forgive me and come into my heart and be my savior.' I've never really been born again, I've never really received him as my savior. And today I want to give my life to Jesus Christ. I've been running from him, I've been hardening my heart against him." God brought you here today to hear this message. The Bible says now is acceptance time, today is the day of salvation. I want to give you now opportunity to open your heart today and to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior. I want to give you an opportunity to invite Christ to come into your heart, to become a child of God, to be born again, to be saved, to be forgiven. All heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you are here today, you say "I want Jesus Christ to come into my heart to be my savior, to be my Lord," if that's your prayer and that's desire, I want you to raise your hand up and back down and say, "Pray for me, pastor John. Pray for me right now, I want Jesus Christ to come into my heart and forgive my sins and to be my savior. I want him to be my Lord today."

I want to pray for any that are here, just slide your hand up and back down, I'm going to pray for you. God bless you. God bless you. Anybody else? Don't be afraid to raise your hand. I'm going to lead you into prayer. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. Anybody else? Hold your hand up high. God bless you. On this side over here. God bless you. Anybody else? Don't be afraid. God bless you. Is anybody else...just say, "Pray for me, I want Jesus Christ"? God bless you. "To come into my heart, forgive my sins, to be my Lord and be my savior today." Anybody else?

Lord, I pray for those who have raised their hands, I pray for anybody else that may be here today. Lord, you know their need. I pray for some that, Lord, that maybe need to confess you before men and then make a stand of their heart, of their life, Lord. They need to publicly confess you today and publicly stand for you today, Lord. Not just to raise their hand, but to say, "Lord, I commit my life... I dedicate my life and I surrender my life to you today." Maybe some that have, Lord, fallen into sin today and they need to rededicate their life to you today, Lord. Draw them to a commitment today, to turn to you today and surrender to you today, Lord. But Lord, I pray for those that have raised their hands today, Lord. Help them to stand for you and to follow you and to commit their lives to living for you now, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Give them the strength and the boldness to follow you now in Jesus's name, amen.