

Christmas And The Love Of God

1 John 4:9-10

Pastor John Miller

I want to talk this morning about the love of God and Christmas. Did you know that Christmas is all about the love of God? You can't really properly understand Christmas without understanding God's love, so I want you to notice in verses 9 and 10. Let's read those, or I'll read them and you follow. John says, "In this was manifested, or demonstrated, or displayed the love of God ..." There's our theme, "Toward us because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein his love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and He sent His Son to be the propitiation or the sacrifice for sins."

Now, whenever you read the gospel of John or the epistles of John, you're reading from the apostle of love. Did you know that? John is known as the apostle of love because he has so much to say about love. It's John who wrote in John 3:16, "For God so ..." What? "Love the world that He ..."

Did what? "Gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should never perish, but have everlasting life." So John became known. Even though he was the son of thunder, he became known as the apostle of love, and John has a lot to say about the love of God. Now, I want to point out three facts that John makes about God's love.

Three things about God's love. First of all, there's the proclamation that God is Love, the proclamation that God is Love, and we back up to verses 7 and 8. He says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knows God." Look at verse 8. "He that loves not knows not God." Why?

For God is what? God is Love. You know that that is one of the most amazing statements in all of the Bible about love? God is Love. Now, what does John mean when he says that God is Love?

Well, it's God's essential nature. It's one of the most incomprehensible and affirmative statements about the nature of God. So it's talking about God's nature and God's character. Notice it doesn't say God loves or God is loving, and He is, but the statement has to do with the nature of God as to His intrinsic nature, what He is in His essence, God is love. So it means that everything God is, everything God does is influenced and affected by His love.

Even His judgments are loving judgments. Now, let me mention some aspects of God's love as drawn from Scripture. First of all, the Bible teaches that God's love is great in Ephesians 2:4, where he talks about the great love of God. Certainly, God's love is greater than tongue or pen could ever tell. God's love is infinite.

God's love is infinite. We sing as well in the song about, "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell, goes beyond the farthest star reaches to the lowest hell. If you

would ink the oceans fill, were the sky of parchment made, 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." Greatest topic in all the Bible, God's marvelous love. So God's love is great. God's love is infinite, which means, by the way, you can't exhaust it and you cannot understand it.

And thirdly, God's love is unchanging. Theologians say immutable. That's because if God is in His essence, as to His very nature, love and God is immutable and changing, then God's love does not change. In James 1:17, it says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift comes from above, down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." That statement, no variableness, no variation means God does not change.

It means that God is immutable, He's unchange ... Everything changes. You look around this room right now, there'll be a time when everything will change. We will change. Everything we know, and see, and touch, and feel will change, but there's only one immutable rock unchanging, and that is God Himself and His love.

It's also gracious. Write that down. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love Him because He first loved us." Even in verse 7, for God loved us first. We love because He loves us, which indicates that God's love is gracious.

What do we mean by that? It means that there's nothing in us that would cause God to love us. Now, I know that there's a lot of preaching going on today where preachers talk about, "You're wonderful, you're awesome, you're amazing, you're gifted, you're talented, you're beautiful," and kind of just want to pump people up, and it is true, we're created in God's image, and that God loves us, and we're special because He set His love upon us, but the focus is God's love, not the object loved. And in the Bible, it says, "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it?"

You go, "Well, that's my neighbor's heart. That's not my heart. That's someone else's heart. That's not my heart." That's the heart. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked."

"Who can know it?," and that's the truth. The Bible says, "All have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There's no one righteous, no not one." Bible says, "We all, like sheep have gone astray, we've turned everyone to our own way," but yet, God graciously loves us. Why?

I don't know. We're not lovely. There's nothing in us. Now, if you're, this morning saying, "Well, I don't know about that preacher boy," I'm pretty lovable, then you need help. If you think God loves you because of your looks, or your talent, or your ability, or your charisma, you're deceived. Just thought I'd encourage you.

God loves you because He is Love, because He's a God of Love and a God of grace, and a God of mercy. God's love is gracious, and God's love lastly is eternal. Write down Jeremiah 31:3, where the prophet Jeremiah speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said, "I've

loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." So God says, "I've loved you with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness, I have drawn thee." So what do we celebrate at Christmastime?

I'll tell you, we celebrate the love of God. Amen?

Amen.

We celebrate the love of God, that God so loved the world, this rebellious world, this wicked world, this world lying in darkness, that God so loved the world, that's the sinners in the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will never perish but have everlasting life. So you miss Christmas if you miss the love of God, and you don't think about, and sing about, and meditate on God's marvelous love. But He moves from the proclamation in verse 8, that God is love to, secondly, the statement of the proof of God's love in verses 9 and 10. So we have the proclamation, God is love, then we have verses 9 and 10, the proof of God's love. Let's read it again. "In this was manifest the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

"Here in His love," verse 10, "Not that we love God, but that He loved us," and here it is, "Sent His Son to be the propitiation or sacrifice for our sins." Now, I want you to notice in verse 9, God's love was manifested. That word, manifested means to be demonstrated or displayed. The word manifest, to make clear, to make obvious. So God demonstrated, or manifested, or displayed, or made obvious His love for us.

How did God demonstrate or make obvious His love for us? God sent His only begotten Son. Notice it in verse 9, "God sent His only begotten Son into the world." Now, notice the first statement, "God sent," which indicates that Jesus Christ came into the world, that He pre-existed Bethlehem. Jesus didn't start in that manger of Bethlehem, Jesus goes back for all of eternity.

He's the eternal God. It's what we call the eternality of God. He always has been and He always will be. John 1:1, "In the beginning was the ..." What?

The Word.

"And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So you have the eternal Word, in the beginning, was the word, you have the personal Word with God, face-to-face, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and then you have the divine Word, and the Word was God, and then you have the incarnate Word, John 1:14, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." So God sent His Son in verse 10. In verse 14, the Father sent the Son. Someone said, "He wrapped His love in flesh and blood and sent it down to man."

I like that. You know, I haven't started shopping yet for Christmas, so pray for me. But I only have one person to buy a gift, that's for my wife. I got it figured out. I'm going to be okay.

Just pray for me. I get it done. So I shopped just for my wife. My wife does all the ... But she wraps all the gifts, and she sets it all up, and it's amazing, and you see all these beautiful ... Well, God wraps His gifts, and God preordained before time ever existed that He would send His Son.

So the gift is eternal life. The package is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the life. So Jesus comes as the package, but the gift that we get in Christ is eternal life. But I note that, "He sent," verse 9, "His only begotten Son."

Verse 10, "God sent His Son," and verse 14, "The Father sent the Son." So He preexisted. He was sent by the Father. He also came willingly and voluntarily on this rescue mission. Now, what is the term or the phrase in verse 9, "Only begotten Son" mean?

It's important that you understand the term. There are those that misinterpret that term as though Jesus was created or begotten from the Father, that there was a time when Jesus was not. There are false teachers who teach that Jesus was created. He wasn't really existing in eternity past the Jehovah's Witness, by the way, teach that. They teach that God created Jesus Christ, that He was an angel, and they didn't coexist with God the Father from all eternity past.

That's not what the Bible teaches. I just quoted John 1:1 in the beginning, was the Word, so Jesus is the eternal Word, the personal Word, the divine Word, and the incarnate Word, and if you jump down to one more verse in chapter 1 of John, he's the revealing Word. "No man has ever seen God at any time, but the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," actually a direct statement about Christ's deity, and that he came to reveal the Father to us. So Jesus isn't begotten in the sense of created or came into existence. What does it mean then?

I believe the best phrase or idea is uniqueness, that conveyed in this term, begotten Son only. Notice the word only. Not just begotten. He's the only begotten. You know what it's conveying?

It's conveying uniqueness. Years ago, I looked up that word in the dictionary, unique, and it means, says, "One of a kind, having no equal." I'll always love that. One of a kind, having no equal. Guess what?

Jesus is unique. There's no one like Jesus. Amen?

Amen.

No one comes close to Jesus Christ. Did you know that you cannot, it's impossible to have a thought too exalted about Jesus? You take the most exalted thought that you can muster in your little pea brain, and it's not too exalted when it comes to Jesus Christ. Let me mention some unique features about Jesus. I've already mentioned, number one, that He preexisted His birth in Bethlehem.

He was alive and existing before He was born. He comes from eternity past. Number two, only

Jesus was born of a virgin. How's that? He's the only person ever born of a virgin. We know the story, when the angel came to Mary, that she was shocked.

She said, "How can this be? I don't know a man. I haven't been intimate with a man," and the Angel Gabriel said, "The power of the Highest will come upon thee and overshadow thee, and that which is conceived in your womb will be the work of the Holy Spirit." So Jesus is virgin born. Now, let me tell you, the implications are super important.

There's a lot of movement today to just kind of water down or deny the virgin birth. You cannot give up the Bible's teaching on the virgin birth. You deny that, you deny Christianity. If Jesus wasn't born of a virgin, then He was no different than you and I. He was a sinful Man who, died on the cross for His own sins, and His death did not atone for our sins.

But the fact that He's virgin born indicates that He's divine and that He's human. It's called, forgive me for the theological terms this morning, it's called the hypostatic union. Hypostatic, two natures and one person. Fully God, fully man, one person, Jesus Christ. Not two people, not God and man blended together, but one person, two natures.

Fully God and fully man, and His humanity did not lessen His deity, and His deity did not lessen His humanity. Fully God, fully man, and one person. Let me tell you something, no one like Jesus. Amen.

Amen.

No one like Jesus. Fully God and fully man. He could speak to the wind and it would stop. He could turn water into wine. He could walk on water. He could raise the dead.

How's that? He could give sight to the blind. Jesus can multiply a few pieces of bread and feed the multitude. He was God in human form. That's what Christmas is all about. So He was born of a virgin, then He lived a sinless life.

You know that Jesus is unique, in that He's the only One who's never sinned? He's the only One who has lived on earth and never sinned. Can you imagine raising Jesus, mom and dad? Goes to a parent-teacher meeting, "Your little Jesus is amazing." Well, He is the Son of God, you know?

Man, imagine the bumper sticker on your donkey, "My Son is the Son of God. My child's the Son of God." Pretty amazing. He never thought an evil, thought He never said an evil word, He never lusted, never had hatred, never had unrighteous anger. He was perfect in all His ways, and then Jesus died and the only One to do this a substitutionary death.

You got to get the word, substitutionary in there, right? Substitutionary, meaning He took your place. He took my place. He died in the place of sinners. Notice it in verse 10, by the way, go back to our text.

It says there that, "He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our ..." What? For our sins. Now, another big, important word you need to understand, propitiation. It means that when Jesus died on the cross, He satisfied the demands of God's law, so He died for God the Father.

Yes, Jesus died for sinners, but He also died for the Father. God's law was broken, and the Bible says, "The soul that sins shall surely die." Instead of us dying, Jesus took our place. That's the substitutionary part. He took our sins and He paid our penalty.

He died in our place, but it satisfied the law. If I am driving too fast, and I get caught speeding, and I get a ticket, and it's \$100 fine, and I pay him \$100 fine, then the law is satisfied, right? It's propitiated. So Jesus died and satisfied the demands of God's law, "The soul that sins shall surely die," so Jesus paid the price, and He propitiated God the Father. But last but not least, only Jesus rose from the dead, never to die again.

Only One born of a virgin, only One lived a sinless life, only One that died a substitutionary death and propitiated the father, and only One who ever rose from the dead, never to die again. Let me give you a distinction, when other people came back from the dead, they came back in a mortal body. They had to die again. You imagine you get death out of the way and you got to do it again? I mean, you have to go through it again.

Lazarus come forth. He was already in heaven, hanging out. Now, he's got to die again. But when Jesus ... Listen to me carefully, He came out of the grave, He came out in a glorified, immortal body, never to die again.

And the body that He rose from the dead with is the same kind of body that you're going to rise from the dead with. He is the prototype. He's the first fruits, or the forerunner of those who die. So your body, my body at the resurrection, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, will be immortal and eternal. So Jesus rose from the dead.

So Jesus Christ is absolutely and completely unique. So we have the proclamation that God is Love, in verse 8, we have the proof of God's love, verse 9 and 10, that God sent His Son, so the abstract, God is Love, became the concrete that God sent His Son to demonstrate, to display once and for all. If you ever doubt God's love, take a good, long look at the cross of Christ. Matter of fact, if you're going to summarize Christmas, starts with the cradle, goes to the cross, and ends with the crown. I love that.

Starts with the cradle, goes to the cross, and ends with the crown, for Jesus Christ, who's coming back again in power and glory. But notice thirdly and lastly, the purpose of God's love. So we have the proclamation, we have the proof, and now we have the purpose, verse 11 down to verse 15. Now, why did the Father send the Son? Well, again, go back for just a moment to verse 9, "That we might live through Him."

We have, in this passage, several statements as to why God sent His Son at Christmas. And in verse 9, it's very clear that we might live through Him. Do you know you're not living without Jesus? You don't have the life of God in your soul. You have physical life, but you don't have

spiritual life.

When the Bible says that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, whoever believes in Him would never perished, would have everlasting life." Everlasting life is not just living forever, it's a new quality of life. It's eternal life, it's spiritual life. It's life on a new plane. You know, when you become a Christian, you start to live.

You understand why you're here, where you came from, where you're going, what the purpose of life is all about, and so you come into that life. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the ..." What? "The Life." He's the Way, without Him, there's no going.

He's the Truth, without Him, there's no knowing. He's the Life, without Him, there's no living. Amen. So man needs reconciliation. So He's the Truth, He's the Life, He's the Way.

We're brought back into the life of God through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Notice second purpose that God sent His Son is in verse 11 to 13, that we might love one another. We sing at Christmas, "Surely He taught us to love one another." Look at it in verse 11, "Beloved, if God so loved us ..." Here's the application, "Then we ought to also love one another."

That's the point. If God loved us and send His Son, then we should love others. "No man," verse 12, "Has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us. Hereby, we know that we dwell in Him, and He and us, because He has given to us His Spirit."

Now, when the passage there, by the way, says, "No man has seen God at any time," what that means is no one has ever seen God in His essence, because God is not only Love, but God is Spirit, and they who worship Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth. We've seen manifestations of God, we have seen an incarnation of God, but we've never, with our human body and our naked eyes, no one has ever looked upon God. You couldn't look upon God and survive. You couldn't live. You say, "Well, aren't we going to see God when we get to heaven?"

Yeah, and we're going to have a new body to be able to do that. To be able to see God, we'll have a new body, we'll be glorified, and we'll be in heaven, but Jesus came to reveal Him. He is an incarnation of God. But the fact that God gave His Son, the point, verse 11 to 13, is that we should love one another. That's Christmas.

God loves us, we should love each other. John R. W. Stott said, "The gift of God's Son not only assures us of God's love for us, but it lays upon us an obligation to love one another." That's true. When I think of Christmas, it reminds me to love others, even as God loved me. Now, I want you to notice thirdly, the purpose of God's love in verse 14, that He, that is Jesus, might be the Savior of the world.

What an awesome statement that is. And we have seen and do testify, verse 14, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Isn't that great? Why did God the Father send God the Son? The answer, to be the Savior of the world?

In Luke 2, when you read the Christmas story, and the shepherds were out in the field, they were awakened at night by the angels, right? And the angel said to the shepherds, "Fear not, for behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." All people. He's the Savior of the world. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who or which is Christ the Lord."

I'm so glad that those angels didn't say, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a philosopher." The philosophers are fine, but the world needed a Savior. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a psychologist." We're going to be fine then. A military leader, a politician, an economist, a mathematician, a scientist.

No, a Savior. Jesus came to save us from our sins. Jesus said it this way. He said, "I come to seek and to save that which is lost." What does He mean by, "I came to seek and to save?" What do we mean when we say, "We're saved"?

I like that good old gospel word, saved, by the way. When you become a Christian, you're saved. Saved from what? Saved from sin's penalty. Remember, Jesus paid the price.

You're saved from sin's power. You're set free to live a life of holiness and godliness, and you're free from the power of hatred, and unforgiveness, and jealousy, and lust, and greed, and from all of the sins that had you shackled. So sin's penalty, sin's power, and one day you'll be free from the presence of sin altogether. By the way, that's the past, the present, and the future aspect of our salvation. We have been justified, we're being sanctified, and one day, we'll be glorified. Amen.

Amen.

So I've been saved, I'm being saved, and I will be saved. But you know what it also means? It means that I have God's purpose. When you get saved, you have purpose. You know where you came from, you know why you're here, and you know where you're going.

Christmas answers the great questions of life. "Where do we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going?," and it's answered in God's word, and it's answered in the Gospel, that God created us to know Him, and the Christian life is knowing God and enjoying Him forever, and one day, we will be with Him in heaven for all eternity. But we need to get the big picture and understand that Jesus Christ came to make His blessings flow.

Far as the world, the curse is found. You know when man sinned in the garden of Eden and fell, it brought a curse over the whole creation. All creation groans and travails in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. But Jesus came to save the world. When we sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come," did you know that was originally written as a song about the second coming of Jesus Christ?

That's a song about His second advent, "Let earth receive her King." Jesus is coming back the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and you have to have the big picture at Christmas. You have

to go from the cradle, from the cross to the crown, and you have to understand that He's coming back as King of kings and Lord of lords. He's coming back to rule and to reign. The Bible says, "As the lightning that shines from the east to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Amen.

I don't know about you, but my heart thrills with so much joy and so much excitement to think Jesus Christ is coming again. Amen. He's coming again, and there will be peace on earth. There will be righteousness. There will be justice for all, as He comes King of kings and Lord of lords.

He comes to be the Savior of the world. So we have the proclamation, God is Love, the proof that God is Love, and the purpose that God is Love to save us from our sins, but we also need now to respond to God's love. Verse 15, in closing, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him." That's a Christian. You have God dwelling in you, and he is in God.

So we are in God, and God is in us. How? By we confess that Jesus is the Son of God. So my question in closing this morning is, "Will you confess Jesus as the Son of God, that He came from heaven, that He died upon the cross for your sins, that He rose from the dead, that He's coming back to reign in righteousness?" You say, "Well, how do I confess that He is?"

First thing you have to do is realize that you're a sinner. The Bible says, as I quoted earlier, "All have sinned, all have fallen short, no unrighteous, no not one." If we say we have not sinned, then we deceive ourselves, and we're calling God a liar because He said we have sinned. Then, the second thing you need to do is repent of your sin. That means you change your mind about the way you're living, and you turn and go the other direction, so you realize, "I'm a sinner. I'm headed to hell."

"If I don't repent, I will perish. I will be separated from God for all eternity, but I need to change my mind about my sin and I need to turn around." Repentance involves the mind, it involves the emotion, "I'm sorry for my sin," and it involves the will, "I turn and I trust Jesus Christ, and Him alone to save me." Now, I want to make it clear, that you're not a Christian because you go to church, and you're not a Christian because you live in America. You're not a Christian because you have a Christian haircut.

You're not a Christian because you've been baptized. Do you know you're not even a Christian because you believe in God? You know, the Bible says that demons believe in God and they tremble, but they're not saved? You can believe that God is real. You can believe that Jesus died for your sins.

You can believe He rose from the death, but the question is, "Have you trusted Him? Have you put your faith in Him? Have you put your confidence in Him?" Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. It's not enough just to believe, it's saying, "Lord, I commit my life to You. I trust in You."

Bible says, "By grace, you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourself, it is a gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast." So it's a gift, but we receive it by faith. Faith is simply reaching out and trusting in, and receiving in what God gives us. When we wake up Christmas morning or Christmas Eve, there's presents under the tree, you open them up. You wouldn't think of saying, "No, I don't want your gifts."

Well, God has a tree. It's the cross, and He gave His Son to die for you. And the gift is eternal life, but you must reach out by faith and open your heart and receive Him today. And if you've come to the church service this morning, maybe you're here for the first time, maybe you're visiting, maybe, just maybe, and I believe this happens quite often, you've been here week after week after week after week, maybe you've been in church your whole life, but you've never been born again. You don't have the life of God in your soul. Maybe you haven't really surrendered Him.

Maybe you got everyone fooled around you, but God sees your heart. God knows your heart. Have you ever repented and trusted in Jesus and believed in Him and been born again? Jesus told Nicodemus, a very religious Jewish man, He said, "You have to be born again to enter the kingdom of God." Jesus is the Way, Jesus is the Truth, and Jesus is the Life, and the only way to get to heaven, the only way to know the truth, and the only way to have the life of God is by believing in, and trusting in, and receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Amen.

There's no reason for anyone to leave this church service this morning without knowing your sins are forgiven, and then if you die, you would go to heaven. The greatest gift ever given was God gave His Son so that we might be forgiven and we might have life. If God has spoken to you through this message today, and you're not sure that you're a child of God, maybe you don't know, for sure, that if you died today, that you would go to heaven, you've never really trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, I would like to lead you in a prayer right now, inviting Christ to come into your heart and to be your Savior. So as I pray this prayer, I want you to repeat it out loud, right where you are after me. Make it from your heart, inviting Christ to come in and be your Lord and Savior.

Let's pray. Dear Lord Jesus, I'm sorry for my sin. I pray that You'll forgive me and come into my heart and make me Your child. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and help me to live for You all the days of my life. I believe in You, I receive You as my Lord and Savior.

In Jesus' name. Amen. If you prayed that prayer and you meant it, God heard that prayer, and I believe that God will and does forgive your sins. We'd like to help you get started growing in your walk and relationship with Jesus Christ. God bless you.

If you just prayed with Pastor John to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, we are so excited for you, and we'd like to send you a Bible and some resources to get you started in your relationship with the Lord. Simply click on the contact link at the top of the page, and tell us

something like, "I prayed to accept Christ." We'll get your Bible and resources mailed out to you right away. God bless you, and welcome to the family of God.