

Sermon for December 25, 2025 – Christmas Day

1 John 4:9-11 EHV

Theme: **Christmas reveals God's love.**

- 1) He sent His Son to save you.
- 2) His Son's love changes you.

⁹This is how God's love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another.

Christmas and love seem to go hand in hand. Most holiday songs sing about love, and people are encouraged to be generous to family, friends, and strangers. Food banks and shelters usually receive their largest donations during this time of year. What is Christmas without love?

And yet, the kind of human love most celebrated at Christmas often has very little substance. It is based on feelings that fade once the holidays are over. Human love is flawed. Human love is selfish, often seeking something in return. Human love fails.

Thankfully, another kind of love exists—one that is neither flawed nor selfish, and one that never fails. It is a life-changing love whose source is the very heart of God Himself. With the apostle John as our guide, let us reflect on how **Christmas reveals God's love.** 1) He sent His Son to save you. 2) His Son's love changes you.

Part One: He sent His Son to save you.

Our sermon text comes from a longer encouragement in which the apostle John urges Christians to love one another. For what reason? Because, as the verse right before our sermon text states, *God is love.*ⁱ

What a beautiful description of God! Love is not just something God expresses from time to time; love is who God is.

But that invites the question: what is love? Listen to how God defines it in Scripture:

*Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. It does not brag. It is not arrogant. It does not behave indecently. It is not selfish. It is not irritable. It does not keep a record of wrongs. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never comes to an end.*ⁱⁱ

Love, therefore, is not merely an emotion or the act of giving people what they want when they want it. True love sacrificially seeks the good of others—even when they resist it or fail to recognize it. This kind of love can come only from God.

Yes, God is love, and ⁹*this is how God's love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him.*

Did you catch the reason God revealed His love to us? It's so that we may *live* through Him. Why is that important? Because it implies that we can't live without Him.

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God, human nature has been corrupted. Instead of being united with God, we are separated from Him. Instead of having a righteous heart that always knows and seeks what is good, we do the contrary. Sin has made us the opposite of love: impatient, envious, unkind, arrogant, indecent, irritable, selfish, unrighteous, and content to dwell in the devil's lies.

God is love, and God is life. Apart from Him, we have neither life nor love and exist under the threat of everlasting death in hell.

But God is love. And because He is love, He does not want us to die. Therefore, He took it upon Himself to reunite us with Himself. How? In the most astonishing way possible: by sending His *only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him.*

The term “only-begotten” refers to the special relationship God the Son has with God the Father. Even though there is only one God, the Bible reveals Him as three persons. There was never a time when the Father existed without the Son, and never a time when the Father did not love the Son with perfect, eternal love.

How unfathomable it is then, that God the Father asked His Son to take on human flesh and blood so He could save His rebellious creation – knowing that He would be separated from Him as He hung on the cross. How equally astonishing is it that the Son agreed to His Father's plan!

This, then, is what we celebrate at Christmas: God's unfathomable love in action! The Almighty God, whom you and I sinned against, sent His eternal Son to become human like us! And if that weren't enough, listen to what the apostle John writes next.

¹⁰*This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

In no way, shape, or form did we influence God's decision to love us. He did not look down from heaven and say, “These humans have the potential to be great. Let's save them.” No, when God looked down from heaven, he didn't see one good person among all the masses of humanity. No one was righteous, not even one. Instead, *the LORD saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that all the thoughts and plans they formed in their hearts were only evil every day.*ⁱⁱⁱ

Despite all that, God loved us and sent His Son into the world to save us. How? By allowing His Son to become the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Why? Because there was only one way for mankind to be reunited with God: the Lord's justice would have to be appeased. Every sin would have to be paid for in full.

Think about it: we owe God a great debt, so what does He do? He sends His Son to pay that debt! Having lived the perfect life we all failed to live, Jesus took our sins upon himself to pay for them all. As He hung on the cross, He suffered the full wrath our sins had earned so that, at the end of His suffering, He could declare: It is finished. All your sins are fully paid. You are reconciled to God! And to prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that this is true, Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning.

Oh, how great is the love God lavished upon us at Christmas! He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to save it so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

And that brings me to the next point I want to make about the love God expressed to us at Christmas: not only does it save you. It also changes you.

Part Two: His Son's love changes you.

And we definitely need to be changed. How so? Because sin has corrupted us to such a degree that, even though Jesus reconciled us to God, we don't have the knowledge, desire, or will to receive the blessing His reconciliation offers.

The apostle Paul put it this way: *You were dead in your trespasses and sins.*^{iv} And just as dead people can't desire or do anything to make themselves alive, neither could we.

But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses.^v How did He do that? The same way He raises all the dead: by the power of His Spirit working through His Word.

Yes, the Gospel message of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection is the very tool the Holy Spirit uses to awaken new spiritual life in us. He uses His Holy Law to get us to acknowledge our sins. He uses the Gospel of God's love for us in Christ to create faith in our hearts so that we turn from our sinfulness in repentance and live by faith in Jesus, who loved us and gave himself up for us.

We can't change ourselves, but God most certainly changes us. Like the sun causing the dark, icy moon to become warm and full of light, so God's Christmas love does the same for us. It raises us

from our spiritual death and gives birth to a new spiritual life in us that wants to reflect to others the great love God shows us in Jesus.

For this reason, the apostle John writes: ⁱ*Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another.*

Please understand John's encouragement correctly. He is not using God's love to guilt us into loving other people, nor is he holding God up as a mere example for us to follow. His point is this: if God loved you so much that He saved, changed, and united you with Him, then you should love others in the same way God loved you. Why? Because God has united Himself to you through faith, and His love flows through you.

Let me explain it another way: how much effort does the moon put forth to shine in the night? None; it merely reflects the sun. In the same way, reflect the light of God's Son in your life. How? By always looking to Him in faith, receiving His love in joy, and naturally doing the things God saved you to do, like loving others as He himself has loved you.

Sadly, we still have a selfish, sinful nature that will remain in us until the day we die. The devil uses it to prevent us from receiving and reflecting God's life-giving love. How? By turning our thoughts inward instead of Godward. And as we turn our focus on ourselves, the light of God's love becomes dim. Patience gives way to irritation. Contentment to envy. Humility to arrogance. Instead of viewing others as precious souls for whom Christ died, we see them as competitors for worldly things.

Oh, how pathetic we become when this happens. What can we do to stop it? Turn to Christ in repentance so you can bask in the great, forgiving love He expressed to you at Christmas and Easter. His love cleanses and changes you. It gives you the power, will, and guidance to reflect His love to others so they, too, might rejoice in His saving name.

Yes, Christmas certainly is all about love: not our human love for each other, but God's great saving love for us. His love does not fade away with the holiday season. It is always there for us to rejoice in and share with those God places in our lives. It is a perfect love that doesn't necessarily give us what we want, but always gives us what we need for our everlasting salvation. Amen.

ⁱ 1 John 4:8 EHV

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 13:4-9

ⁱⁱⁱ Genesis 6:5 EHV

^{iv} Ephesians 2:1 EHV

^v Ephesians 2:4-5 EHV