

Week of December 14, 2020: Untangling Christmas: Love



Discussion Questions Set #1

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” (Luke 2:8-20)

1. In sermon, it was suggested that it is important that we recognize that love is the primary motivator in God sending us Jesus. Why do you think it is important to recognize that God’s love of humankind underlies the Nativity story?
2. What misapplications might a failure to recognize love as a motivating factor in the Christmas narrative result in?
3. In sermon, we were a little relentless with the Hallmark Christmas depiction of “Christmas love”, but only to make a distinction between the romantic, sappy love of these movies and the substantial agape love of the Nativity story. Why do you think we so often – or so readily – exchange recognizing “agape” love in favour of noting “romantic Christmas love”?

Discussion Questions Set #2

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us ... let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth”. (1 John 3:16-18)

“Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness”. (Philippians 2:5-7)

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

“Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Ephesians 5:2)

In sermon, we discussed the idea that God’s love revealed through the Christmas story is a love that is both “in action” and “incarnate”. The good news of God’s love wasn’t just delivered in word alone, but it was literally delivered in a stable and placed into a manger.

1. Why is it important that, as followers of Jesus, we recognize that God’s love is an “in action” sort of love? Why is it key to know that God loves not solely in word, but perhaps more profoundly in distinct action?
2. Discuss how Philippians 2:5-7 informs your understanding of God’s love revealed in Jesus.
3. Why is it important that God’s love was “embodied” or made incarnate in Jesus Christ? What is the significance of the incarnation in regards to our understanding of God’s love for us?
4. Discuss the importance of the following statement: “as followers of Jesus, we are to live a life of truthful and actionable Christ-like love”.
5. What do you think it means for the follower of Jesus to incarnate God’s love? Is this possible? How might it be accomplished?
6. Do you believe the following statement to be true or false: word-love becomes action-love when we accept Jesus as “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6)? What does such a statement urge of us?