

## THE GREATEST OF THESE

### The Second Sunday of Advent

**INTRO:** In your Bible, or on your Bible app, please go with me to 1 Corinthians 13. Today is the second Sunday of Advent. Last week we talked about HOPE. Today, we want to discuss the subject of LOVE.

**1 Corinthians 13** is the LOVE chapter of scripture. Read with me...

*"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and exult in the surrender of my body, a but have not love, I gain nothing.*

*4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no account of wrongs. 6 Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails..."*

There are three things I want to share with you today...

**I) THIS IS LOVE:** vv 1-8 Love is one of the themes of Advent. That should be no real surprise since the Bible says in **1 John 4:8** "...God is love". Why did God send us a Savior? Because of Love! **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son..."

Because God is love, He has accepted us into His family. **1 John 3:1** "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are..."

Try to wrap your mind around that. Let's do this, take a moment and think of the worst person you can come up with. (That's not a family member! Don't be thinking about crazy Aunt Percy) Maybe it's someone you have met, or maybe it's a person in history. I'm thinking about Adolf Hitler. NOW, think about adopting that person you're thinking of and making them part of your family. And by making them part of your family, I'm talking about giving them all the rights and privileges of one born in your home, of one of your children. They are in your care. They live in your home. They eat at your table. Would you do that for the worst person you can think of? I wouldn't either. But God did! And when He did, it included me. It included you. THIS IS LOVE! God loves you. He accepts you. The question is, will you accept Him?

Now notice the second thing...

**II) THIS IS JESUS:** vv 1-3 Now follow me just a second. We see that God is love. And that because of love, God sent His SON into the world. Now the Bible also tells us that Jesus is God's expression of love to us! Jesus came as God in the flesh. **Hebrews 1:3** "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature..." I like how the ESV translates that verse, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature..."

## I) THIS IS LOVE: vv 1-8

**II) THIS IS JESUS:** vv 1-8 CONTINUED So, if God is love, and if Jesus is the exact representation of God to us, then we can safely say that Jesus is love. Jesus is God. **John 1:1** states, *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”* As God the Son, He too can be described by the most powerful word in use today—love. So, let me read 1 Corinthians 13 again and wherever we see the word love or charity, let’s put the name of Jesus there. Follow along with me.

*“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not JESUS, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have absolute faith so as to move mountains, but have not JESUS, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and exult in the surrender of my body, but have not JESUS, I gain nothing.*

*4 JESUS is patient, JESUS is kind. JESUS does not envy, JESUS does not boast, JESUS is not proud. 5 JESUS is not rude, JESUS is not self-seeking, JESUS is not easily angered, JESUS keeps no account of wrongs. 6 JESUS takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices in the truth. 7 JESUS bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 JESUS never fails...”*

If you don’t have Jesus, you can’t really have genuine lasting love. And if you don’t have love, you certainly don’t have Jesus.

**1 John 4:7-12** *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”*

Now notice...

**III) THIS IS YOU:** vv 4-8 Let’s re-read vv 4-7, and as we read, put YOUR name in the verses and see yourself for who you are in Christ! You have been changed by the power of His love!

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** *“JEFF is patient, STEVE is kind. GAYLA does not envy, DAVE does not boast, BROOKE is not proud. 5 DEEANN is not rude, DALLAS is not self-seeking, VIRGINIA is not easily angered, CHRISTOPHER keeps no record of wrongs. 6 LORI does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 TERRY always protects, CODY always trusts, SAMMI always hopes, PATSY always perseveres.”*

Remember who you are in Christ and what a difference His love has made and can make in your heart! We are able to love because of Him! **1 John 4:19** *“We love because he first loved us.”*

Oh what a difference the love of God can make in a life! You need to want that for yourself!

**I) THIS IS LOVE:** vv 1-8

**II) THIS IS JESUS:** vv 1-8

**III) THIS IS YOU:** vv 4-8 CONTINUED **ILLUS:** Let me tell you about Doug Nichols. Doug went to India to be a missionary. Shortly after his arrival in India, when he had just started studying the language, he became infected with tuberculosis and was put in a sanitarium.

The sanitarium was a bad place. It was not very clean, and the conditions were made more difficult because there were so many sick people there. But Doug decided to do the best he could in that situation. So he took a bunch of Christian books & tracts & tried to witness to the other patients. But when he tried to pass out tracts, they were rejected. No one wanted them. He tried to hand out books, but no one would take them. He tried to witness, but he was handicapped because of his inability to communicate in their language. He felt incredibly discouraged. He tried every way to be faithful to God's call on his life, but it seemed he was destined to fail because no one would listen.

Because of his TB, every night at about 2 o'clock he would wake up with chronic coughing that wouldn't quit. One night when he awoke he noticed across the aisle an old man trying to get out of bed. The man would roll himself up into a little ball & teeter back & forth trying to create the momentum to get up & stand on his feet. But he just couldn't do it. He was too weak.

Finally, after several attempts the old man laid back and began to weep. The next morning Doug understood why the man was weeping. He was trying to get up to go to the bathroom & didn't have enough strength to do that. So his bed was a mess and there was a terrible smell in the air.

The other patients made fun of the old man. The nurses came to clean up his bed and they weren't kind to him, either. In fact, one of them even slapped him in the face. The old man just laid there and cried.

The next night about 2 o'clock, as Doug recalled, he said, "I started coughing again. I looked across the way and there was the old man trying to get out of bed once more. I really didn't want to do it, and didn't feel like it, but somehow I managed to get up and I walked across the aisle and I helped the old man stand up. I got him to his feet but he was too weak to walk, so, I took him in my arms and carried him like a baby. He was so frail and light that it wasn't a difficult task. I took him into the bathroom, which was nothing more than a dirty hole in the floor, and I stood behind him and cradled him in my arms as he took care of himself. I then carried him back to his bed and laid him down. As I turned to leave he reached up and grabbed my face. He pulled me close and kissed me on the cheek, and said what I think was 'Thank you.'"

Doug said, "The next morning there were patients waiting when I awoke and they asked if they could read some of the books and tracts that I had brought. Others had questions about the God I worshiped and His only begotten Son who came into the world to die for their sins."

Doug said that over the next few weeks he gave out all the literature that he had. And then he said, something astounding happened. Many of the doctors, nurses, and patients came to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

He said, "Now what did I do? I didn't preach a sermon. I couldn't even communicate in their language. I didn't have a great lesson to teach them. I didn't have wonderful things to offer. All I did was take an old man to the bathroom & anyone can do that."

**I) THIS IS LOVE:** vv 1-8

**II) THIS IS JESUS:** vv 1-8

**III) THIS IS YOU:** vv 4-8 CONTINUED **ILLUS:** He said, "Now what did I do? I didn't preach a sermon. I couldn't even communicate in their language. I didn't have a great lesson to teach them. I didn't have wonderful things to offer. All I did was take an old man to the bathroom & anyone can do that."

**CONCLUSION:** Someone has said, "People will not care how much you know, until they know how much you care." *"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."* All the words and all the good deeds in the world become meaningless without love.

So we come to the question, "Have you received the kind of love that changes you? Have you received the kind of love that never gives up or runs out? Have you received the love that enables you to love God and others?" Remember, God is love! Jesus is God in the flesh. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes on Him would not perish, but have eternal life. Have you received God's greatest expression of love - Jesus?

**John 1:11-12** *"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."*

**That's why He came!**