

God's Gift of Love

1 John 4:7-11

In John 3:16-17, Jesus tells us, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*” Jesus did not come into the world to condemn us but to save us – He knew the real enemy was sin, and He suffered on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. The apostle John was totally correct in 1 Jn. 4:8-9 when he said that the love of God was made manifest when he sent Jesus into the world to die for us.

It was because of this love and the grace and mercy of God, that God planned to send Jesus into this world. An angel of the Lord told Joseph in Mt. 1:20-23 “*Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel*” (which means, God with us). Jesus is indeed God with us, and we are so thankful that He came into the world.

Many people think of the infant Jesus when they think on God’s gift of love. He was like us physically and endured all the challenges of growing up in this world. Because He became one of us, He understands all our strengths and weaknesses. John said in John 2:25, “*and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.*” Though Jesus was the Son of God, He became flesh and dwelled among us. The Hebrew writer observed in Hebrews 4:14-16, “*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” Because He understands us and was tempted like we are, He can help us in our greatest times of need.

God knew that we needed Him! And no one else will do. In Jn. 3:14-15 Jesus said, “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*” There are many prophets in the O.T., but only one Son of God. Moses gave us the Law, but Jesus gave us grace and truth. The prophets warned people, but Jesus sacrificed Himself for people. Angels could tell us God’s message; but Jesus Himself was God’s message, the Word become flesh. And no one else could do what Jesus did for us. Rev. 5:12 reminds us that because Jesus was slain as a Lamb for our sins, He is worthy “*to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.*”

The Lord Jesus gave three reasons why He came into the world. First, He came to save us from our sins. In Luke 19:10 we read, “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*” Jesus came looking for the lost, that He might save them from sin. And because of sin, we were all lost, and we all need a Savior. So many heartaches in this life come from sinful behavior. As

we all have seen and know to be true, when people reject God, they fill their lives with every kind of evil. Jesus wanted to bring salvation to our lives so that we could have hope and true life. Jesus isn't trying to manipulate us but to bless us. Jesus puts it this way in **Mt. 20:28**, "*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" Sin separates us from God and enslaves us to evil; Jesus redeemed us with the price of His blood. He redeemed us by giving Himself, His very own body and blood. There could be no higher price, no greater gift.

Jesus not only died for us individuals, He also wanted to rescue this sinful world. Paul greeted the churches of Galatia in **Gal. 1:3-5**. He said, "*May God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.*"

All we need to do to know that this world is evil is to watch the evening news. But since sin came into the world, it has remained evil. The world Jesus was born into was predominantly pagan and superstitious. It was and is a world with a warped understanding of God, people live with warped values and warped morals. **Romans 1:28-32** describe it well, "*Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.*" Our world is warped and evil, and it seems that it grows more so with each passing day. More and more people participate in evil and encourage others to do evil. What is truly tragic is that people think living in a sinful world is better than a world where God is honored and served.

Second, *Jesus said He came to bless our lives with a better way, an abundant way of life.* The Lord Jesus said in **Jn. 10:10**, "*The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life*" (NLT). In Christ, our lives overflow with His love. **Titus 2:14** says, "*He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.*" Jesus not only saves us; He changes people. He transforms them from sinners to saints. His love, His truth, and His life show us a better way to live and a better way to treat our fellow man. The Lord taught us kindness, respect, integrity, honesty, and justice. He is the Prince of peace, the hope of mankind, and the balm of Gilead.

Eph. 2:8-10 says, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*" When people live in sin, they spread misery and heartache everywhere; *but when they serve the Lord, they become a blessing to everyone.* They encourage, give hope, show love, bring peace, and spread joy and good news. Christians do not speak out

against sin because they hate, but because they know the agony and hurt sin brings. The Lord offered us something better. He was indeed God's gift of love. *What God gave to us was not things, but a Person.*

Third, *Jesus said He came to bear witness to the truth.* **John 1:14** says of Jesus, “***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***” Jesus in **Jn. 14:6** proclaimed, “***I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.***” Jesus was the very embodiment of truth and honesty. Because of Jesus, we have the ability to distinguish truth from error.

When Jesus appeared before Pilate, Pilate wanted to know if the rumors he had heard were true. **John 18:37** reads, “***Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose, I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.***” Jesus and the truth that God reveals are inseparably bound with each other. If we wish to know the truth, we must listen to His voice.

At present, our world is filled with contradictory lies, myths and false hopes. Jesus came to give us an undeniable and unvarying path to the truth. How truly wonderful to have an unchanging moral and spiritual standard by which we can have a basis for all our values. Since God has raised Jesus from the dead, we can have confidence that the Lord's teaching is true. You can trust his promises, and you can believe heaven is waiting for you. **1 Jn. 5:20** says, “***And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.***” It is a great gift to know what and who is true.

The Lord Jesus wants to bless you with His love. He wanted His death on the cross to make a difference in your life. If you take seriously the sacrifice of Jesus for your sins, you will come to love Him. In **Jn. 12:32** Jesus said, “***And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.***” The Lord Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price to get your attention and to demonstrate His complete and wonderful love for you. He wanted to draw you to Himself. He wanted you to love Him the way He loved you. You need to let His sacrifice matter to you.

Romans 5:6-8 puts His love this way, “***When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.***” We were once weak and needed saving; we were once ungodly and didn't take God seriously; and we were sinners who had violated God's teaching and were offensive to Him. In spite of all this, the Lord Jesus was still willing to die for us to show us His love.

When we responded to His love and became Christians, our response revealed that the cross matters. Surely, the God who created us and gave us His Son has many more blessings in store for us. **Romans 8:32** tells us, “***He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,***

how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" In Christ, God's love never ends! **Romans 8:35-39** asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing can separate you from the love of God; but do not take His love for granted. Never turn away from God, as some do.

When Jesus redeemed you with His blood, He gave His utmost for you. We all need to remind ourselves of how God values us as Christians – as His children. **1 Peter 2:9-10** says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Don't let anyone rob you of a close, loving relationship with Jesus Christ. Love Him, serve Him, and give yourself up to Him.

Jesus came into the world to save us from sin, to give us a better way, and to reveal the truth to us. Does it matter whether you are saved or lost? Whether you know the truth or have been deceived? Yes, it does! You need to understand that Jesus is the best thing that ever happened in to world. He came to lift us out of darkness and out of hopelessness. He took the initiative and offered His body and blood on the cross, because He did not want to leave us where he found us – in darkness and without hope.

The love of Jesus is indeed a gift. The Lord loved us even when we didn't deserve it, even when we were lost in our sins. Don't take this marvelous gift of love for granted; it is priceless. And nothing else even comes close in comparison.

If you wish to enjoy the love of God, you must accept His gift of love. How do you do this? You must first believe in Jesus, and turn away from the sin that only destroys; then confess Jesus as the Christ, the only Son of God, and then be baptized into Jesus the Christ. When you are baptized into Christ, you are "**crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin**" (**Rom. 6:6**). This baptism is an immersion in water, just as Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River and just as Philip baptized the Eunuch. When you are untied with Christ in baptism, the Lord sets you free from sin and makes you His child, a fellow-heir of heaven. Today, will you accept His gift of Love? – Jesus came into this world a little over 2000 years ago, to set you free from sin and death – are you ready to accept this gift? After all, there is no other way unto salvation.