

Radical Love: A Christmas Gift to the World

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we talk about the greatest Christmas gift to the world. Stay with us for radical love.

Introduction

This is the season of the year when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. The Church has traditionally celebrated each Sunday in December leading up to Christmas Day by teaching and contemplating on four of the main themes that Jesus brought to us. These things are hope, peace, joy, and love.

Each week we have been talking about one of these topics leading up to Christmas when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We also light a candle each Sunday. You will see that we have four candles lit. This week's candle is for love which leads us to today's encouraging message, *Radical Love: A Christmas Gift to the World*.

Today as we talk about radical love we will be discussing God's ultimate expression of love, loving others as Christ loves us, and the ripple effect of love.

God's Ultimate Expression of Love

When we think of expressions of love we think of gifts, serving others, making sacrifices for others, and more. God showed radical love when he gave the ultimate gift to the world, His Son. This is what we celebrate at Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ.

There is an old saying that says, "It is not the gift that matters, only the thought behind it". This is a good saying and is wise. It also helps us see something about God's gift to us in sending his Son to be born as a human on earth. God did not only give us his Son as a gift, he did it for a purpose. Let's read John 3:16-17.

John 3:16-17

(16) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

God's love for mankind is so great that he gave us his one and only Son. But this gift has a purpose. God sent Jesus to pay a ransom for every one of us. Jesus came to pay the sin debt we each have that we will never be able to pay. Only Jesus can do this. He is the only one without sin.

The gift is even better though. The gift is truly free and comes with no guilt or obligation. Verse 17 says that God sent his Son to save the world, not condemn the world. God is offering this radical gift and all we have to do is reach up and receive it. There are no strings or obligations attached.

Our hearts are forever changed though. When we accept this gift of radical love and forgiveness our hearts are changed. We start to love others as Christ loves us.



Loving Others as Christ Loved Us

When you read about Jesus' interaction with people in the gospels and Acts you cannot help but see and feel the love he had for each person as he interacted with them. He showed grace and forgiveness to the woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery. He spent time and ate meals with tax collectors who were known to be dishonest and thieves. He patiently asked questions and directed the religious leaders to God's truths in the scriptures and showed them where their traditions had wandered from God's plans and purposes.

Jesus speaks about love and is recorded in John 15:9-13 saying:

John 15:9-13

(9) "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. (10) If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. (11) I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (12) My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. (13) Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Part of this radical love that we have received as a free gift is to pass it on. Love others just as radically as Jesus did. Be quick to show mercy and grace. Give the benefit of the doubt and lead people to the truth, do not try to argue with them about it. I have never personally witnessed someone convinced into a belief and faith in Jesus Christ through debate or arguing. I have seen many led to Jesus through acts of love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

To love others as Christ loves us is the single most important thing we can do as Christians. Jesus tells us this and it is recorded in John 13:34-35.

John 13:34-35

(34) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Love your neighbor and love one another just as Jesus loves you. This love which is a result of God's radical gift to us creates a ripple effect that can travel around the world.

The Ripple Effect of Love

Sir Isaac Newton said in his third law of physics, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." In other words, for every action, there is a ripple effect.

If you toss a pebble into a pond or lake it creates a ripple or a wave that replicates and spreads out in every direction. These waves continue on and on until they reach shore.

The radical love we receive from God through Christ is just like that pebble thrown into the water. That love inspires us to show love to others. That is then replicated in them and they show love to still more people. If unobstructed, this will continue around the world.

In Luke chapter 10, we read the story of the good Samaritan. The parable Jesus told says a man was lying in a ditch along a road beaten and left for dead. Two men, a priest and a Levite, crossed the road and went past the man so as not to have to pay any attention to him. A Samaritan saw the man, carried him



to an inn, dressed his wounds, and took care of him. When the Samaritan had to leave, he left money with the innkeeper to continue to care for the man and promised to pay anything more when he returned.

Imagine the impact this had on the innkeeper. The love the Samaritan showed for this injured man was astounding. That had to have been an inspiration to the innkeeper, and probably his employees and other patrons.

When we show love to someone it inspires them to show love to others. It can also inspire even more people to do the same. This is the ripple effect of God's radical love.

Conclusion

Today we want to challenge you to identify specific ways you can show the love of Christ to others. How can you show the love of Jesus to other members of your family? Your small group or cell site? Your coworkers or fellow students? How can you show Christ's love to your community?

The Apostle Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

(1) If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding 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 a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (3) If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

God's love has little to do with religious duty, tradition, and practice. It has everything to do with how we view and treat our fellow man whether they know Christ or not. God sent Jesus to save the world, the whole world. He didn't send Jesus to care for and save one group or nation only.

Show the radical love of Jesus Christ to others. That is the love that will change this world in ways that we cannot plan on our own. Take God's ultimate Christmas gift of radical love and share it with everyone you meet.

