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REDISCOVER CHRISTMAS

LESSON 3

TITLE: FINDING LOVE.

1 John 4: 7-8

⁷ Dear friends, we should love each other, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has become God's child. And so everyone who loves knows God.

⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

The love that Jesus embodied in our world is indeed fearless love.

The love of Jesus defies and overcomes fear.

Today as we continue our journey through Advent, we are focusing on the love that Jesus brought into our world and our lives.

As a quick recap, the word Advent means “coming” or “arrival,” and the season is marked by expectation, waiting, anticipation, and longing.

Advent is not just an extension of Christmas—it is a rediscovery of Christmas, a season that links the past, present, and future.

Advent offers us the opportunity to share in the ancient longing for the coming of the Messiah, to celebrate His birth, and to be alert for His second coming.

Advent looks back in celebration at the hope fulfilled in Jesus's coming, while at the same time looking forward in hopeful and eager anticipation to the coming of Christ's kingdom when He returns for His people.

During Advent we actively and hopefully wait for both. And each week, we are focusing on a different attribute of God represented in the coming of Jesus: hope, peace, joy, and love.

CHRIST IS LOVE EMBODIED.

The Bible talks about love in many places.

God is love and the Bible is His love story for all humanity.

From Creation, God made people and shared time with them in the garden as companions and children.

When sin entered the world, bringing death and brokenness and separation from such a close companionship with God.

This relationship with God brings us into a relationship of love.

It is a reunion with love itself.

John tells us that God is love.

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God personifies it.

Love is His nature, and He has shown it to us by sending the baby Jesus.

LOVE DEFINES AND PROPELS US.

As Jesus teaches His disciples, He wants to make sure that they love like He does.

How will people know that they are followers of Jesus?

By the love they show to other people.

Love is what defines us. It marks us and characterizes us.

Each of us can certainly find opportunities in this Christmas season and in our current cultural climate to allow God's love to flow through us to others.

LOVE EMPOWERS US.

We're currently in divided times.

It's by no means an excuse, but throughout history, our world has been filled with wars and plunder and oppression.

There have always been the weak and the powerful, the haves and the have-nots.

There has been too much us versus them since Jesus's day and even farther back in history.

It's why Jesus's teaching was so radical.

It's why God's love is so radical. Jesus said, *(Matthew 5:43-44, NIV). "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'"*

He befriended hated tax collectors, and even invited one, Matthew, to follow as one of His twelve disciples.

He spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, which broke a couple societal taboos at once.

He told His listeners that if a dreaded Roman soldier forced them to carry his pack for a mile, which the soldiers could and did do, to carry it two miles instead.

Luke 10:30-35 (Good Samaritan) This is a good and challenging story for us today.

Jesus was crossing the divide. He reached across the cultural, spiritual, political, and racial divisions and calls us to do the same.

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Maybe reaching across the divide begins in your family.

Maybe in your home or neighborhood or workplace or community.

There is a humility in love, a willingness to put someone else first.

Sometimes love means taking the simple step of building that bridge as a gesture and an invitation.

Sometimes it's being willing to listen and not defend.

It is always being willing to choose to see someone else, not as other, but as us, equally loved by God.

THIS IS GOD'S LOVE.

THIS IS THE GIFT OF CHRIST.

THIS IS THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS.