

Unwrapping Christmas Love v.2
December 22, 2019

INTRO

Good morning! We're continuing our Advent series and this morning we'll be Unwrapping Christmas Love. Traditionally, during this time it's common for us to look back at the birth of Jesus, when love came down to earth and made a way for us to be reunited with our Creator, God. The arrival of Jesus brought God's kingdom here to earth and, for all who believe, we have the opportunity to join in that kingdom, and participate in all that God is doing. But it also is a time where we look ahead... towards the return of Jesus. The Bible says that there will be a day where we experience the fullness of our relationship with God and His kingdom. A day where there will be no more pain, sadness, hurt, or brokenness. So as we unwrap Christmas love, we need to remember that God's love isn't just something that happened, but it's something that's happening every day until Jesus returns.

When I think of unwrapping a gift the first person I think about is my grandfather. He was the master of unexpected gifts. He used to find all sorts of creative ways to give, and it was usually money... but not like you'd expect it. I remember one time he took a 25 pack of chewing gum, back when they were foil wrapped sticks all bunched together. Do you remember? You'd have to pull the ribbon around to tear it open and there would be this row of foiled sticks? Well this one time, instead of sticks of gum, it was folded money. But he would take the time to leave the ribbon in tact, and carefully open up the folded end, wrap the folded bills back in the foil, then glue the end of the package so that it wouldn't look tampered with. I remember receiving those gifts... I remember always being surprised, even though we all knew to expect it.

As we've been Unwrapping Christmas Peace, Joy, Hope, and now Love... God has been showing us how these things may be more than what we first see or think.

Christmas Peace is more than just keeping peace, but it's making peace.
Christmas Joy is more than happiness, but it's a deep seated delight.
Christmas Hope is more than a wish, but a confidence in God's promises.

And today Christmas Love is more than just a reactive feeling.

And Christmas love is really God's love.

Big Idea: God's love is more than a reactive feeling, but it is a commitment that is focused on the well being others.

BODY

I. God's love is not reactive

1. God's love chose to reach out to the world, despite the world turning away from Him.
 - a. John 3:16 – *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*
 - b. God's love enters into a space that seems to be at odds.
 - i. Romans 5:8 – *"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
2. Maybe this time more than any other, with family and business get together, we can feel at odds with those around us. Maybe they're not quite "enemies", but they feel pretty close to it! God's word says that love needs to exist in that relationship. We're commanded to take the first step in entering that space.
3. Can you think of someone that you could choose to love, despite feeling at odds with them?

God's love is not reactive. It enters into a space and then what does it do when it gets there...? He commits.

II. God's love commits

4. Once God chooses to love He says that's it... there's no backing out.
5. When God says that He loves us, He means that there is no other option because He is all about love.
6. That's because God's love is more than a choice – it is His character.
 - a. Romans 8:38-39 – *"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."*
 - b. I read this verse and I begin to think that even if God wanted to be unloving, there's no possible way that He could. It's just not who He is.
7. How many people can you think of that you bump into day after day that prove to be unlovable? Can you think of someone, can you choose to step into that space and then commit to love them? I'd encourage you to write that name down and make that a driving point this Christmas season.

God's love is not reactive. And when He chooses to love He commits... there's no backing out. Why? For the well being of others.

III. God's love is focused on the well being of others

1. God's love is extended outward – not self-seeking. He chooses to commit to loving us for our sake.
2. God's love, through Jesus, placed mankind before itself and moved towards us in grace and mercy.
 - a. Ephesians 2:4-5 – *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”*
 - b. God save us.
3. That is what we celebrate when we celebrate Christmas. That is why we worship around Christmas. God is with us because God in His mercy, compassion, and love... saves us. And he continues to move in us, bringing us closer and closer to living like Jesus, until the day comes where all things are restored. All things are made new. For our sake and for His glory.
4. That person who you wrote down their name a moment ago. Can you think of one way that you can be focused on their needs rather than your own? Can you think of a practical way to serve that person without looking for anything in return? Do you know that your love can show them Jesus...? I do, and that's where God works.

Big Idea: God's love is more than a reactive feeling, but it is a commitment that is focused on the well being others.

CLOSING

1 John 4:19 - *We love because He first loved us.*

This verse does not say that we have to love. It's not something we're forced to do or we HAVE TO do out of duty... kicking rocks along the way. It says that we GET TO love, because God has shown us how to love... and how to love well!

LOVE WELL!

If you're listening to this now and you think it's an impossible task then I want to tell you that it's not. It's not impossible, because we've been graciously given the most amazing gift in all of history. His name is Jesus. And we can give this love only because He first loved us. He loved us so much that He died for us, so that if we believe in Him we can live alongside our Creator, God. We learn and grow and we serve in this love. Not only for this life, but this love is carried into eternity.