

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, December 21st, 2025
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Love
Fourth Sunday of Advent
1 John 4:7-12

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Jesus, Son of the living God, splendor of the Father, eternal light.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, King of glory, sun of justice, son of the virgin Mary.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, everlasting Lord, Prince of Peace.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, our help and our refuge.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, God of peace, friend of all, source of life and of holiness.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, brother of the poor, goodness without measure, unending wisdom.

Lord, we praise you!

Jesus, good shepherd, true light, our way and our life.

Lord, we praise you! Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O Immanuel,

O Wisdom from on high,

O Lord of might,

O Branch of Jesse's stem,
 O Key of David,
 O Bright and Morning Star,
 O King of nations,
 We rejoice and are glad
 on this bright Christmas morning,
 for truly you have come,
 full of grace and truth.
 Even now, come into our hearts again.
 Show us the path of knowledge.
 Comfort us in our mourning.
 Save us from our sin.
 Open wide our way to heaven.
 Turn our darkness into light.
 End our sad divisions
 and be our King of peace,
 so that every creature in heaven and on earth
 will join in a chorus of praise,
 and shout with joy to you, our Lord. **Amen.**

Advent Candle Lighting

(Love) Fourth Sunday of Advent

Leader: Today we light the Candle of Love.

People: **We remember that God's love is revealed most perfectly in Jesus Christ.**

Leader: In a world hungry for compassion, longing for belonging, and searching for meaning—

People: **God sends His Son, Love incarnate, to dwell among us.**

Reading:

From the beginning, God's love has pursued His people. It is the love that called Abraham, delivered Israel, spoke through the prophets, and prepared the way for the Messiah. In Jesus, the fullness of God's love took on flesh. Christ's love heals the broken, welcomes the outcast, and restores the weary. His love is patient and kind. His love casts out fear. His love never fails.

This candle reminds us that love is not merely a feeling, but a holy gift, an eternal covenant, and a calling to live as Christ lived—selflessly, sacrificially, and generously.

Leader: The light of love shines because God first loved us.

People: **And we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us.**

Leader: Love is the heart of Advent.

People: Love is the heart of Christmas.

Leader: Love is the heart of God.

People: And His love is made perfect among us.

Prayer:

God of everlasting love, as we light this candle, kindle Your love in our hearts. Teach us to love as You have loved us—with humility, compassion, and grace. Remove all fear, bitterness, and division from us. Fill our homes, our church, and our world with the light of Christ's love. May Your love guide our steps, transform our lives, and shine through us to others. In the name of Jesus Christ, Love made flesh. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!

Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**O God, in the beginning you spoke,
and creation was born, the object of your loving care.**

**In the fullness of time you spoke,
and the Word became flesh, Jesus, gift of your love.**

**We wonder at the miracle of creation;
we stand in awe before the mystery of the incarnation.**

**Forgive us earthbound creatures, feeble in faith,
empty of hope, lacking in love.**

This year let the miracle and mystery of Christmas happen for us again.

**We wait upon you with ready hearts, O God,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news!

There is no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the Spirit
of life in Christ Jesus

has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

The old life has gone;
 a new life has begun.
 Know that in Jesus,
 God embraces you, forgives you,
 and strengthens you to live a renewed life.
 Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn #139: 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'

Hark! the herald angels sing,
 "Glory to the newborn King:
 peace on earth, and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled!"
 Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
 join the triumph of the skies;
 with th'angelic hosts proclaim,
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain:

Hark! the herald angels sing,
 "Glory to the newborn King"

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
 Christ, the everlasting Lord,
 late in time behold him come,
 offspring of the Virgin's womb:
 veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
 hail th'incarnate Deity,
 pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
 Jesus, our Immanuel. [Refrain]

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all he brings,
 risen with healing in his wings.
 Mild he lays his glory by,
 born that we no more may die,
 born to raise us from the earth,
 born to give us second birth. [Refrain]

Responsive Reading

Psalm 80:1-7

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
 you who lead Joseph like a flock.
 You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.

² Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh,
 stir up your might
 and come to save us!

³ **Restore us, O God;
 let your face shine, that we may be saved!**

⁴ O Lord God of hosts,
 how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

⁵ **You have fed them with the bread of tears
 and given them tears to drink in full measure.**

⁶ **You make us an object of contention for our neighbors,
 and our enemies laugh among themselves.**

⁷ **Restore us, O God of hosts;
 let your face shine, that we may be saved!**

Anthem (Music Ministry): 'The Birthday of a King'

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

1 John 4:7-12

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his

only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Sermon

Today we lit the last candle of Advent, the candle of Love.

We live in a world that speaks endlessly about love and its importance, a world that sings endlessly about love, a world that has whole industries based around worldly love and by doing so endlessly cheapens the meaning of what real love is.

We live in a world that has taken the most profound attribute of God and reduced it down to feelings, to preferences and to emotional and chemical responses that rise and fall with the circumstances of life.

Just look at what the world tells people about love.

- Love is love
- Follow your heart
- Do what makes you happy
- Love means accepting everything

The reality is that while the world seeks out love in as many ways as it can, it will never find real love because it has rejected the very author of love, God who is love.

All around the world today there are people chasing relationships, chasing possessions, chasing experience, chasing pleasure, all trying to fill the void that they feel in their life, all trying to chase away an emptiness that can only be filled by God's love.

The truth is that the world confuses lust for love, sentiment for love, tolerance for love and the emotional and chemical responses of the brain for love, and for that reason, the emptiness they feel can only be filled temporarily, and in the end, the emptiness always returns.

There is no lasting love outside of God who created love, defines love and demonstrates love perfectly in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Advent reminds us that love is not of this world, it is not some emotional response, it is not lust, pleasure, power, wealth or possessions. It is not some abstract concept that we can define on our own in our own ways.

Love is incarnate, love was born, love took on flesh, love has a name – Jesus.

Just look at what John says about love.

1 John 4:7-8

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is Biblical love.

God is the source, God reveals love, God demonstrates love, God commands love and God perfects love in His people.

It all begins with God!

Love does not begin in mankind; it does not start in our hearts or our heads it starts with God!

Just look at how foolish the world is when it comes to love, it tells people to 'look inside yourself, trust your feelings, follow your heart'

The Bible tells us:

Jeremiah 17:9

**The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?**

If love depended on the hearts of mankind, there would be no love in this world.

Love is from God alone, He defines it, He initiates it, He empowers it and He sustains it.

Love is not something that we produce, it is something that the Holy Spirit brings to the faithful as He regenerates and sanctifies the faithful.

John then says, '**and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God,**'

This is a powerful statement, John is saying, If you do not love with God's love, you do not know God.

Let that sink in, it does not say that you need to grow, mature or do better at loving. It says that if you do not love with the love of God, you do not know God.

God's love is not an optional addition to the Christian life, it is the evidence for spiritual rebirth, it shows that the Holy Spirit is at work in the faithful.

Faith demonstrates justification, and love demonstrates regeneration.

We are saved by grace, through our faith in Jesus, and true faith always produces the fruit of God's love.

John Calvin explains this simply:

Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone.

- John Calvin

Advent is the revelation of God's divine love

1 John 4:9

⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him

God's love is no secret, there are no clubs, cults or denominations that have a special knowledge of God's love.

God's love is not theoretical, abstract or complicated.

God's love for mankind was manifest. It is visible, historical, physical and personal.

That baby born in a manger 2000 years ago, is the manifestation of God's love for mankind

This is why sentimentality and tradition can destroy the meaning of Christmas.

Christmas is not about just the nativity scene, warm feelings, and family gatherings.

Christmas is about God revealing to the people of the world His love through the sending of His only Son to die upon the cross so that our relationship with Him could be reconciled and we could live with him for eternity.

1 John 4:10

¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

This is the foundation of Biblical love.

Love is not our affection for God, love is not our commitment to God, or even our obedience and devotion to God.

Those are all the responses, results of love, not the definition of love.

Love begins with God's action towards us, it begins with a word that many in the modern church try to avoid.

Propitiation.

God sent His Son to be propitiation for our sins.

In Greek the word is **ἱλασμός (hil-as-mos')** and there is only really one translation for it, an atoning sacrifice.

This means that God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice of divine justice, as a payment required for our sins, to turn away the wrath of God from you and I.

That alone teaches that the world belief that love is acceptance without judgment is completely wrong.

God did not show us His love by ignoring our sin. God show us His love by directly confronting our sin and dealing with it fully and finally in Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

If God did not care about our sin, if our sin was acceptable in any way, then there would be no reason for God's wrath and no need for the cross.

If God did not take sin seriously, if there was no righteous judgement of sin, then there would be no need for propitiation, no need to an atoning sacrifice to repair our relationship with God.

If God did not care about sin, there would be no reason for the season, Advent would never have existed.

But God does care about Sin, and mankind, so he sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for you and I.

1 John 4:11**¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

The love of a Christian is not a sentimental love, a permissive love a tolerant love. It is a love that understands why God sent his Son to atone for our sins. It is a love that is sacrificial, costly, self-giving and flows out of the blood shed upon that cross 2000 years ago.

It is a love that understands God's love is electing, initiating, sovereign, unconditional and covenantal.

God loved every one of us when we were still dead living in our sin, when we hated Him, when we rejected Him, when we rebelled against Him.

Christian love understands that God loved us so dearly he made the ultimate sacrifice.

Christians love others not because they have done anything to deserve it, or earn it, but because we know that God loved us even when we did not deserve it.

1 John 4:12**No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.**

This is why we need to live our lives as the Salt and Light of God's Word, because when we live and love like God's children in this dark and broken world, when the people of God loves the world around it with God's love, we are the witness of the reality of God.

Do you remember when we looked at John chapter 13 it said this:

John 13:34-35**³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

The world will know God, not by denominations, not by buildings, not by music, not by schools, not by relevance, not even by the number of people. It will know God by Love.

Advent should remind us that love is not sentimental, it is sacrificial. Not emotional, but covenantal. Not shallow and emotional, but substitutional, not human in its origin, but divine in its source.

Advent declares to the faithful. God loved us first, God sent His son, God satisfied his own wrath and brought us into eternal life.

The Love of God causes people to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit that is living within them, because it flows from God and God alone.

The world can only imitate that kind of love. It can feel affection, express desire, show kindness and display compassion, but it cannot produce or replicate divine love.

The world's kind of love says, 'I love you because you make me happy, I love you because of what you do for me, or I love you as long as you agree with me.'

The world's love is conditional, self-focused, performance and benefits based, it is always temporary.

God's love is the opposite.

God's love says, 'I love you because I chose to love you!'

God's love is rooted not in the worthiness of the one loved, but in the character and nature of the One who Loves.

This means that God's love is not dependent upon you, it is not random, and it is not reactive.

God loved you before you existed, before you sinned, before you rebelled, before you rejected Him, at the very instant of your existence, God set His love upon you.

This means that God's love does not begin when someone begins to believe in him, he always loved them even when they do not believe.

This means that God's love does not end when you fail or fall into sin.

This means that God's love is not fragile and God's love is not uncertain.

God's love is eternal, sovereign, unchanging and unstoppable.

If God's love depended on you and I, we would lose it.

Because it depends on God, we are secure in our salvation.

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ 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 God from His faithful. Not suffering, not failure, not sin, not death and not Satan and his minions.

God's love is always there, and it works in us through the Holy Spirit, bringing us closer and closer to him through our sanctification.

God's love is not a passive love it is an active love.

This is another place that the world has love wrong.

Love is not accepting someone just as they are and never asking for them to change!

Love is wanting someone to be better today than they were yesterday and God's love works through the Holy Spirit in us to change us from who we were into who he is calling for us to be.

Hebrews 12:3-6

³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵ And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

⁶ For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

God love is a purifying love.,

God's love forces us to confront our sins, break our idols, tears down the things of this world which destroy us and reshapes us through the work of the Holy Spirit into the image of Christ, reflection of His love for all the world to see.

This means that if your understanding of love does not call people to holiness, it is not God's love.

Jesus said:

John 14:15

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Not, if you love me, you will feel deeply about me.

Not, if you love me, you will sing loudly and passionately about me

Not, if you love me, you will give up an hour a week for me

If you love Jesus, if you love God, you will want to live your life obedient to His Word. Our love of God is expressed in our obedience, the evidence of our love is not our passion, not our emotion, not our devotion, not the time we give, or the money we give, the evidence of our Love of God is how much of our life we willingly submit to Him.

1 John 5:1-5

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

God's love is meant to fill us to the brim, regenerate us, bring us to new life, and overflow into the world around us.

God pours His love into us, so that we can pour it into the world.

It is through our love, that the invisible God becomes visible.

This is why evangelism matters.

People can reject arguments about God, people can ignore the Bible, people can mock our convictions and our beliefs.

But they cannot deny a supernatural love that sacrifices, that serves, that forgives and endures. They cannot deny a love that is evidenced in all you think, say and do in every aspect of your life.

A love that manifests itself, not in a manger, not in a miracle, not in a teaching, but upon a cross.

The manger was where love came to us, the cross revealed what love does.

Our God did not just simple came to our world, he came to take the wrath of God in our place, to pay the debt of our sins, so that we could be welcomed back into the family of God.

1 John 4:10

¹⁰ **In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

On the cross, justice was satisfied, wrath was absorbed, sin was paid for, righteousness was given, enemies became children, the condemned were forgiven, The dead brought back to life.

This is LOVE.

Not that we love God, but that HE LOVES US!

Advent began in the manger, but it is manifested at the cross.

Advent is not just about a cute baby, sentimental warmth and seasonal joy, it is the story of divine love advancing towards Calvary.

The wooden manger points to the wood of the cross.

The swaddling clothes point to the burial cloths.
The proclamation of peace points to the price of peace

The child that is born becomes the lamb that is slain.

Advent looks back and reminds all that God has done, so that we look forward to all that God will do.

The one who came in humility will return in Glory.

God's love has not left us to fend for ourselves.

His love did not abandon us to this fallen world, it will return, it does instruct and it will reign in our lives.

Christians have Hope in our justification, Faith in Christ, Joy because of our Salvation and a Love that we express to the world as it flows from us from the One True Source.

So, brothers and sisters, do not settle for the world's definition of love.

Do not redefine love to avoid conflict.
Do not cheapen love to gain acceptance.
Do not silence God's truth in the name of worldly love.

Instead let the love of God pour into you and into the world through you.

Love as God loves, sacrificially, truthfully, covenantally, relentlessly, and holy. Let the world know of God's love through the way you live.

Advent love is God-initiated, Christ-centered, Cross-shaped, spirit empowered and eternally secured for the faithful.

The baby in the manger is the Savior on the cross.

The lamb that was slain is the King who will return

The God that loved us first will love us forever.

So go and share His love as you walk as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this dark and broken world.

Let us pray,

Merciful God, loving Father,
we give you thanks and praise
that you have mercifully fulfilled
the word of your promise to the patriarchs
and sent your only Son
to become truly human
for our salvation and blessedness.

O Lord Jesus Christ,
eternal praise be to you,
that you, being rich, for our sakes became poor,
that we through your poverty might become rich;
that you have become our brother,
that we with you might become the children of God.
Grant that you may be born in our hearts,
just as you, though you are Lord of lords,
have for our sakes become a child,
so give us the right childlike mind.
You are the brightness of the Father's glory
and image of his person,
renew us in your holy likeness.

Heavenly Light,

lighten us through the darkness of this world.
 Eternal Life, give us life in you.
 Great Prince of Peace, grant us your peace,
 and keep us ever in your kingdom,
 that we may praise and magnify you in your glory:
 you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign forever.
 Amen.

Source: Freely modified from The Swedish Rite: a translation of "Handbok för svenska kyrkan" by Eric Esskildsen Yelverton, 1921,

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Closing Hymn #159: 'O Come All Ye Faithful'

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
 Come, and behold Him, born the King of angels!

Refrain:

O come, let us adore Him;
 O come, let us adore Him;
 O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord!

God of God, Light of Light,
 born unto Mary, the virgin blest;
 very God, begotten not created; [Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
 Jesus, to Thee be all glory given!
 Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing! [Refrain]

Pastoral Prayer

Amazing God! We adore you and we praise you.

We bring our praises in the name of Jesus Christ,
your Son, our Lord.

We praise you for the way he demonstrated your merciful love
and your gentle touch upon our lives.

We praise you for his coming as light for all your people
of every age and in every place.

We praise you for his coming to set us free,
to open blind eyes, and to heal broken hearts and lives.

We praise you for his readiness to enter into
all that life in this world means to us, that we might,
by your grace, share all that heaven is in him.

We praise you for the way he identified himself with us.
He entered into our pain, our rejection,
our sorrow, our hopes,
and through his baptism, he even tasted
the results and effects of our sinfulness.

We praise you for accepting his sacrifice on the cross
as the price of the healing of our relationship with you.

We praise you more that through his resurrection
he has guaranteed our share in his eternal kingdom.

Lord, our praises are limited by time and space
and by our human weakness.

By your grace, enable us and empower us
that we shall be with you and praise you for ever in Christ.

Amen.

Benediction

The joy of the angels,
the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the Magi,
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,
and the peace of the Christ child be yours this Christmas.
And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**