

# Love

"What Are We Waiting For?" Series, December 20 & 21, 2025 (Advent 4) | 1 John 4:7-21  
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## Without love, we quickly become monsters.

### **The first hour after a baby is born is when love flows between mother and child.**

The baby rests skin-to-skin on mom's chest. It helps the baby to know, "This is mom." The baby can hear mom's heartbeat and sense her breathing. The smell of mom is comforting. The baby's heart rate and breathing stabilize quickly. The newborn will probably try to start nursing. And knows that it is safe to grow and thrive.<sup>1</sup> It's called "the Golden Hour." It's the way love starts flowing quickly in life, and it's the way we are designed by God. What happens, though, when we don't have love? Not just at the start of life but all along the way?

### **Frankenstein horrifies us with what happens when love is missing from our lives.**

Forget groaning green giants with neck bolts. Those all come from movie versions. In Mary Shelley's original book, Victor Frankenstein works feverishly to create life. He makes a model that is a patchwork of pieces strapped together. Then Dr. Frankenstein brings his creature to life in a mix of alchemy and science. But when the creature comes to life, Frankenstein is repulsed. He falls into a sick hysteria, and the creature—rejected by his creator—flees unloved to find his own way. Everything that follows—and it is horrifying—comes because the creature is rejected and unloved. How tragic! Can you imagine being unloved by your creator? And yet, that's how many of us live—either ignoring our Creator or thinking that for some reason He hates us. It matters because without love, we become monsters.

### **Has love been missing from your life?**

When I talk about babies bonding with their mothers in the first hour of life, that may make you think about missing that experience, missing that closeness with your own parents, or missing it with your own children. When I talk about feeling rejected by someone, that may be you. You may just feel alone—like there is some aching hole where love ought to be.

### **Has love been missing from your actions?**

There are two sides to love—receiving and giving. You may have been loved freely, but do you love others freely? Or do you somehow withhold your love? Do you avoid entanglements? Do you withhold words of affection? Do you shun acts of service? Love is costly.

### **Jesus' birth reintroduced the flame of love to a world that had cooled to a dying ember.**

When God created the world, it was ablaze with love. Loyal, steadfast love. Sacrificial, hospitable love. Love burned in the Father's heart and warmed all creation. But sin separated us from the heart of God like a coal pulled away from a fire. No wonder the Bible describes the world before Christ and apart

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/obstetrics-gynecology/services/labor-delivery/skin-to-skin>

from Him as being dark. It's cut off from the fire of divinity and love. But Jesus' being born was like a blowtorch reigniting the flame of love for the world. Which is Good News! Because too many of us are without love and unable to give love.

## No Love?

### **After the Fall, love cooled to an ember.**

Separated from the intense heat of God's love, love languished. Lust thrived. Familial love sputtered. The love of friendship tried to roar to life, but it was always clouded by selfishness and fear. We see the results throughout the pages of the Old Testament, across the pages of history, and everywhere in reality television and on social media. You may have lived the results. What we sometimes call love and settle for is like striking a match in a blizzard.

### **A family rejected the Creature, and a monster was born.**

After being rejected by his creator, Frankenstein's monster ran until he came to a lonely, sad cabin with three residents. The creature took shelter in a little shed next to the house. Inside, he was warmer than he would be outside. From inside, he watched their lives. He served them—helping them to farm and collect firewood. Otherwise, life was hard for the family. From them, he learned how to speak. He learned about the world. Eventually, he thought he would reveal himself to them and ask for their friendship and help. But when they saw him, they were horrified. He was chased by angry villagers—pitchforks, torches, and all. That's when the creature became a monster. That's when the real horror began. That's the danger in not being loved. That's the danger when we withhold love.

### **1 John 4:7-8 warns us about withholding love.**

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

### **To be loveless is to be godless.**

I don't mean that being unloved is godless. What John says is profound. God is love. If we don't love, then we can't claim to know God. If we don't show love then we can't say that we are born of God and filled with God. The contradiction is just too great. If there is no love flowing into your life, it is a tragedy. If there is no love flowing out of your life, it is a travesty.

## Know Love.

### **A monster pleading with his creator to make someone to love him is heartbreaking!**

The Creature is blunt and bitter about the disgust and hatred Frankenstein had for him, "You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me." The Creature still holds out hope, though! He longs to be loved and to love in return. He said, "If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them a hundred and a hundredfold; for that one creature's sake I would make peace with the whole kind!" He begged Victor Frankenstein to create a partner for him, someone to share life with. He thought it was his only hope of being loved or loving.

### **Do you long to be loved?**

You, too, may feel a hole inside that love is meant to occupy. You may feel despised by family or friends. You may feel rejected at work or in the digital world. When you think of someone being unloved, you may picture a person sitting alone, sipping cocoa, and sadly watching TV. That's not always what longing to be loved looks like. The person longing to be loved is sometimes surrounded by people but completely alone. They may tell themselves, "I am loved" like it's a box to check and not a reality to be grasped. They have closed their hearts and become sarcastic, biting, bitter—hurting before being hurt. That could be any one of us!

### **1 John 4:9-10 proclaims that we have been loved!**

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. 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.

### **Love came down to us in Jesus Christ.**

The love of God in Jesus changed my life. When I look back at my teenage years, I felt that giant hole in my own heart. It wasn't because my family failed to love me; they always loved and supported me. It was mostly the all-too-common alienation of adolescence. Middle school was not a happy time for me. I felt alone, even in a crowd, during those years. But something began to change subtly in me during my times with God. Communion stands out to me. As a child, I viewed communion as just a stale cracker and grape juice that made my mouth pucker. But as a teenager, Communion started to become incredibly immediate and personal. I could almost see Jesus' death and resurrection; I could very definitely sense Jesus' love for me. It changed me. Filled an empty spot in me that longed to be loved like that. And I changed. I didn't feel nearly so alone anymore. It made it easier for me to love other people, instead of pushing them away as I had done before. The love of God coming into our lives does that! We have been loved. First. And that is the critical starting point of genuine love. That love has been offered to you in Jesus Christ. Are you ready to accept it today? Are you ready to BE LOVED? That's the starting point of love! But what do we do with that love that is given to us?

## **Grow Love.**

### **1 John 4:12-18 tells us how Christian faith dramatically transforms us.**

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

### **That whole transformation is tied to love.**

We do not see God physically with our eyes. So, how do we know that God is with us? How do we know that He dwells in us, as He promised, and that we dwell in Him? That's the question. It's the work of the Holy Spirit. It's knowing that God has sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. It's confessing

Jesus. It's knowing Jesus so deeply that He becomes the foundation for our lives. It's having confidence for eternity. It's seeing fear melt away. It's loving others just as Jesus loves us. God's love grows inside of us, comes out of us, and pushes out anything that isn't love.

**Which means that the Grinch is more Christian than you might think. [Show "Grinch" picture.]**

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas" is my second favorite Christmas special after Charlie Brown. I like the classic version best. It (To be clearer: "The Grinch movie" instead of "It ...") lacks Linus reciting the Christmas story, and there is no mention of Jesus, so the Gospel is easy to miss. But sometimes echoes of the Gospel are hiding in plain sight. The Grinch was unloved and responded by being a monster. Sound familiar? But then something changed. Was it the singing of the Whos? It was something **more**. That something more causes his heart to grow three sizes that day. And that more, **we** know, is Jesus Christ—the love of God poured out in Jesus Christ that causes our own hearts to grow. We are growing in loving as God has first loved us.

**But love's growing IN US is just a beginning.**

Once we accept God's love, it begins to change us. Love begins to grow. We're able to love God because He has loved us. But love's growing has a point. An end. A direction. That has been John's point all along. Once we have accepted God's love, we are meant to love one another.

## Go, Love.

**Now that love has filled us, love comes out of us.**

**1 John 4:19-21** tells us: **We love because he first loved us.** If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

**Jesus coming into the world was like God taking a blowtorch to relight the fire of love that had turned into an ember in the fallen world.**

When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, that blowtorch lights us up like a roaring fire. But the fire of love within us isn't just for show. It's not like a flameless LED candle that sparkles but gives off no heat. The flame of our love is meant to be a fire burning brightly in a hearth, warming all who come near.

**The bishop from *Les Misérables* loved in concrete ways.**

Enough of monsters! Let's talk about more relatable characters. In *Les Mis*, Jean Valjean was convicted of robbery for taking bread when he was hungry. He was put in a labor camp and subjected to harsh treatment. After years, he was free on parole but branded as a dangerous ex-convict, so that no one would house him. No one except a bishop who fed and sheltered him. Overnight, Jean Valjean stole the bishop's silverware and fled. The bishop was poor, and the silver was some of the very little wealth he had. It turns out that real people can be monsters, too! Valjean was caught and returned to the bishop's residence. The soldiers told the bishop that Valjean had claimed that the silver was a gift. The bishop faced a choice—tell the truth that Valjean had stolen the silver and condemn him to prison again or not. The bishop agreed that the silver was a gift and chided Valjean for leaving behind the silver candlesticks. Valjean would go free and start a new life. The bishop bought Jean Valjean's soul for God

by this act. It's a familiar story to many, but it shows the kind of concrete love that the Bible calls us to show.

**Let's love one another in concrete ways this week.**

There may be no need to give the silver away. But there may be chances to extend kindness to a stranger. You might show mercy and share something precious with someone in need. Maybe you can give grace and forgive someone who has hurt you. There may be chances to be abundantly generous. Maybe you can be considerate instead of cynical, benevolent instead of biting, adoring instead of angry. Love takes many forms.

**Love came down to us and now love can come out of us.**

Jesus' being born rekindled the embers of love in creation. Now there are hearths across the land full of fire, burning brightly. May the hearths of our hearts warm the world as we wait for Jesus' return. Because the fallen world can still be a dark and cold place without Jesus. But a great day is coming when the Son of Man will defeat evil. Sin, darkness, and death will be no more, and the fire of God's love will fill creation forever. I can't wait for that day. Until then, beloved, let us love one another as God first loved us.