

I. Introduction to the 4th Sunday of Advent

A. The Heart of Advent/Christmas: Love

1. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*
2. From the lips of Jesus Himself: His advent, his arrival, his life and work all flow from God's love

B. First three Sundays

1. Hope
2. Peace
3. Joy

C. 4th Sunday: Love

1. More than a warm, fuzzy feeling, or a pleasant emotional response to mutual affection
2. **Love: the choice God makes to extend a specific grace to undeserving sinners**

D. Love and the Bible

1. God describes love
 - a. **1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV)** *⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends.*
 - b. The Bible is filled with descriptions of love that look very, very much like Jesus
 - c. But, how do we know this is an accurate picture of love?
2. God demonstrates love
 - a. **Romans 5:8 (ESV)** *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
 - b. The greatest demonstration of love recorded in the entire history of the world is the death of Jesus, the Son of God, on the cross on behalf of rebellious sinners
 - c. Okay, but how do I know God loves me?
3. God dispenses love
 - a. Love, by definition, requires an object and an action for the benefit of that object.
 - b. **The Shepherd metaphor offers a means for perceiving God's love for us on a deeply personal, daily level**

II. Six Ways God Applies His Love as a Shepherd

A. Applications from Psalm 23 (minus one)

1. God's Love Secures Our Peace
 - a. **Psalm 23:1-2** *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He*

makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

2. God's Love Directs Our Daily Discipleship
 - a. **Psalm 23.3b** *He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*
3. God's Love Overrides Our Darkest Fears
 - a. **23.4** ⁴ *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*
4. God's Love Calms Our Common Worries
 - a. **23.5** ⁵ *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows*
5. God's Love Provides Our Eternal Inheritance
 - a. **23.6** ⁶ *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

B. God's Love Opens Our Way Home

1. **Psalm 23.3a** ³ *He restores my soul.* (Prodigal)
2. Promises
 - a. **Matthew 11:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
 - b. **Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV)** You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.
3. Provision
 - a. Broken wall
 - (1) **Ephesians 2:13-17 (ESV)** ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.
 - b. Torn curtain
 - (1) **Hebrews 10:19-22 (ESV)** ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
 - c. Removed ordinance

(1) **Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV)** ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

4. Opportunity: Come home to love
 - a. Come home to be loved: loved w/everlasting love
 - b. Come home to love: as I have loved you

III. Come home

A. Parable of the Prodigal: come home!

B. How?

1. Confess: Be honest with yourself and God about the state of your soul
 - a. **1 John 1:9 (ESV)** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
2. Call: Ask God for grace
 - a. **Romans 10:13 (ESV)** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”
3. Claim:
 - a. **1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV)** Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.