

1 Corinthians 13:4-8
1 John 4:9-11

Advent 2011

**If God So Loved Us...
“Selfless Love”**

Introduction: Max Lucado-“Just a Moment...”

NOTE: These picturesque and poetic words describe the first coming of Christ-the focus of the Advent season.

John, inspired of the Holy Spirit, described it this way!

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 1 John 4:9 NKJV

TRUTH: The coming of Christ in the flesh is according to John a manifestation, (revealing a unveiling) of God’s love for humanity.

The Divine Love (we learned) is relentless love...

- ✓ Never grows weary
- ✓ Never deterred by obstacles
- ✓ Never stops pursuing
- ✓ Never gives up

This Divine Love is also Selfless Love

Love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, 1 Corinthians 13:4b-5 b NKJV

- ✓ Does not envy
- ✓ Does not parade itself
- ✓ Is not puffed up
- ✓ Does not behave rudely
- ✓ Does not seek its own-A description of selfless love

IMPORTANT: The highest demonstration of selfless love known to the world was the incarnation.

Defined-“In the flesh” (Latin: in-carnare)

NOTE: Not in the Bible but referred to repeatedly

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 NKJV

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. 1 John 4:2-3 NKJV

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 2 John 7 NKJV

IMPORTANT TRUTH: Obviously, the coming into the world of human life on the part of one who is God and has existed for all eternity, could not be expressed in the same way, as it would be for ordinary human being. (NOTE: Born and conceived are used-but still something quite different in the description of His coming).

No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. John 3:13 NKJV

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:17 NKJV

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." John 6:51 NKJV

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, Galatians 4:4 NKJV

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 1 Timothy 1:15 NKJV

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16 NKJV

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:9 NKJV

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, Hebrews 2:14 NKJV

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. Hebrews 2:17 NKJV

Topic of hot debate in the early church (God and man)

- ✓ **1st Century (Docetism)**-Marcion and Gnostics-Christ only “appeared” to be a man. Denied His humanity
- ✓ **2nd Century (Ebionites)**-Denied Deity of Christ. Natural son of Joseph and Mary, but elected to be the Son of God when He was baptized and was unified with the eternal Christ
- ✓ **4th Century (Arianism)**-Arius taught the Christ had a beginning and though similar to God, not the same. *NOTE: Council of Nicea in 325 condemned this teaching*
- ✓ **4th Century (Apollinarius)**-taught that Jesus had a human body and soul but that He had the divine logos instead of a spirit. *NOTE: Condemned in 680 by Constantinople*
- ✓ **5th Century (Nestorians)**-Divided Christ into two persons and Jesus Christ was only the “form” of the union of two natures. The two natures were separated, resulting in two persons. *NOTE: Condemned by Council of Ephesus in 431*
- ✓ **5th Century (Eutychianism)**-Eutyches taught only one nature, not fully divine or fully human-a mixed single nature. *NOTE: Condemned in 451 at Council of Chalcedon*

Orthodox Position: Council of Chalcedon-451-two natures of Christ were united without mixture, without change, without division and without separation. Fully human-fully divine.

Means-Incarnation-Revelation of selfless love-God became flesh

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:5-8 NKJV

NOTE: Theology is interesting, fun to ponder, great discussion. BUT, what are the practical implications?

God invaded our culture in an act of SELFLESS LOVE-a manifestation of God’s love

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

So, what does that look like? Selfless love?

I. Selfless love is aware that the culture must be bridged, not embraced.

- A. The incarnation was a bridge to our culture, yet the purpose of Jesus was to seek and save the lost, redeem humanity, and transform culture.
- B. Jesus did not become like sinful humanity, but He did interact with them (sinners, publicans, prostitutes)
- C. Compassion, not compromise or condemnation was the motivating factor

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Matthew 9:36 NKJV

1. Many have compromised biblical standards, beliefs, faith
2. Other have condemned based on style, culture, dress, preferences
3. Jesus calls us to compassion-that sees the lost as needing hope and salvation

II. Selfless love is aware that a bridge into the culture is to be used to enter that culture.

- A. Had Jesus just come-hid in the wilderness-want to follow me, you have to come to me.

NOTE: The church has done this! "Ok, you can come here if you want. Act like us, dress like us, talk like us, worship like us, believe like us, and you can come."

- B. The bridge is for us to walk into their lives!
1. Generationally-you have to walk into their lives (young and old)
 2. Culturally-you have to go where they are-not just a welcome sign
 3. Have to go into their lives

(ILL) Jesus went to a well at noon!

NOTE: The church is not an organization, we are called to protect! (Matthew 16:18-He will build it) but an organization that is alive and growing!

NOTE: We are not introducing people to an organization but to a person!

(ILL) Invite people to a house (carpet, shoes, coasters, its about seeing what I have-but grandma's house-about seeing her)

III. Selfless love is aware that in order to enter the culture with the love of Christ, self-sacrifice, and surrender must trump self-promotion and preservation.

- A. What better example than Jesus

But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. John 12:23-26 NKJV

Not envious, doesn't parade itself, not puffed up, doesn't seek its own

1. He exchanged angels crying holy for crowds shouting crucify!
2. He vacated a throne to hang on a cross
3. He left the Father's side to experience the pain of being forsaken

B. If He so loved us-we also want to love one another!

Conclusion: In this is the love of God manifest-God sent His only begotten Son into the world.

- ✓ Relentless Love
- ✓ Selfless Love