# LOVE CAME DOWN: ADVENT 1

**John 3.16-21**

Love occupies a prominent place in Scripture and the Christian faith in general. Jesus says loving God and loving our neighbor sums up Scripture (Matthew 22.34-40). We are charged to "love our enemies" (Matthew 5.43-48). Scripture connects the incarnation and death of the second person of the Trinity with the love of God (Romans 5.8; Galatians 2.20; Titus 3.4-7; 1 John 4.9-10).

It is also the case that love is misconstrued in our culture. We tend to offer love conditionally, which, paradoxically, defies the unconditional acceptance we most desire.

**We find Love in the first cause of the universe**

We can say of the Creator of all things: "God is love" (1 John 4.8, 16). This is different from saying that God is loving. For God to be love within Himself, there must be plurality in the first cause. If God was not eternally triune, He would need us to be love (for who would be the object of His love?). The Trinity shows us that God is love and is in no way dependent upon His creation.

This truth goes some way in explaining why God created humans. Our existence is an invitation into His divine love. God's love flows as a gift into the hearts of His people (Romans 5.5).

Through common grace, some aspects of God's love flow into all people. This is why we observe love among non-Christians.

In a naturalistic worldview, love becomes instrumental to our preservation. If this is the case, then love is conditional. But then why is there so much hatred in the world?

God's gracious invitation into His love extends to the fallen, sinful, and broken world (John 3.16). The measure of God the Father's love for the sinful world is the love the Father has for the Son (cf. Romans 8.32). God's love for us is unmerited.

**Humans suffer from disordered loves**

Humans resist the invitation into divine love (Cf. John 5.42, 8.42). John says that we "love darkness" and "hate light" (John 3.19-20). Light and dark imagery appears across all forms of art. Light often communicates hope, purity, & opportunity and darkness expresses duplicity, evil, & death.

John tells us that we love the darkness because we think we can hide our shame. In darkness, we think we will not face the conviction of wrongdoing.

To understand our love for the dark, it may be helpful to draw on the example of those who fight addiction. An addict craves the thing he is addicted to because it temporarily offers satisfaction. When the "high" wears off, he feels shame for his dependence and the consequences of idolatry.

To arrive at a world of perfect love, my heart needs to be renewed.

**Let's help one another live in the light and love rightly**

When we talk of "spiritual formation", we are referring to what Scripture calls sanctification or the edification of one another into the likeness of Christ (Ephesians 4.11-16). We, as Christ followers, "do the truth" (John 3.21).

There is a connection between God's love and our walking in His light. God's love is not permission to do as I please, but an invitation to devote my life to walking in His holy light. The church warns everyone that the alternative to receiving Jesus is "to perish" and face destruction (John 3.16, 17.12). Jesus is the hope of the world.

God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12.6-11). Discipline is not merely punitive, but formative.

May we strengthen one another that we might be increasingly "rooted and grounded in love" (Cf. Ephesians 3.14-16).

In times when it does not feel like God loves us, may we find ourselves in Christ, who suffered on our behalf to transfer us into His Kingdom.

**Key Idea:** God's love flows into the hearts of His people.

**Application Questions:**

What is the connection in this passage between God's love and light?

Why do people prefer the darkness?

What does John 3.21 mean? How does this differ from the man in the dark?

How does a church spiritually form people to receive divine love?