

There are some gifts you will give this Christmas because, well, you just have to

- But there are other gifts you will give because you love to! Because you love that person
- You know the difference when you get them...

John 3:16-17

The idea of making room for Jesus at Christmas times seems absurd

- But it is not and we know it
- The story of the very first Christmas is that there was no room for Jesus
 - The **love gift of God** was relegated to a cold, dark cave
 - We do not always want what we should... (**John 3:19**)
- There is still a question as to whether or not there is room for Jesus
 - **Revelation 3:20**

When we hear Jesus knocking our conscience (perhaps the Holy Spirit) pricks us

- Are we rightly prepared?
- Advent is a time of self-examination
- Christianity is a thing of self-examination under the leading of the Scriptures and the Spirit
- Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Here is the most pressing preparation and most telling self-examination

- We must answer the question: **Am I ready to be loved?**
- Everyone wants to be loved—but the question of whether or not we are ready to be loved **by God** is a different matter entirely
- What do you think that means? Being ready for God's love?

There are perhaps two sorts of people that will readily answer that question

- The naughty and the nice
 - The naughty
 - I have to (and can) do something to earn God's love
 - Being ready means making myself loveable by being better
 - The nice
 - I am already loveable
 - Being ready means expecting the love that I deserve

God is not like Santa Clause

- No one is merely naughty, and no one is anywhere near nice
 - To the supposed nice the Scriptures say: You are not loveable
 - To the supposed naughty the Scriptures say: You will never be loveable
 - To supposed nice the Scriptures say: All have gone astray—none have done good—wretched and blind
 - To the supposed naughty the Scriptures say: You cannot make yourself loveable—filthy rags

To prepare ourselves for God's love to appear is to realize that **we are not and can never be loveable**

- Remember last week and God's description of His people in Isaiah?
 - **Isaiah 1:4 (NLT)**
Oh, what a sinful nation they are—loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil people, corrupt children who have rejected the Lord.
 - The law (Shows God Holy—Proves us wicked)
- But then remember His promise to His people?
 - **Isaiah 1:18 (NASB)**
"Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.
 - John 3:16 (**so loved!**)

The truth about Christmas is that we are more wicked than we ever dared imagine but more loved than we ever dared dream

- God does not love us because we are lovable—we are loved because God is love!
- We are not loved because we are lovely—we are lovely because we are loved by God!

Deuteronomy 7:7-9^a

7 The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples for you were the fewest of all peoples,
 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation...

To prepare ourselves for Christmas is to see that we too were like the Israel spoken of in Isaiah 9

- Quoted in Matthew 4:15-16
 “THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI,
 BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE OF THE GENTILES—
 “THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT,
 AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH
 UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED.”

Advent is the coming (and coming again) of that “great light that dawned” (Messiah!) to people in darkness

- Christ is the love gift of the Father

Only then can we be prepared to receive God’s love, because only then do we see the true nature of God’s love

- It is not deserved (we are not nice)
- It cannot be earned (we are not merely naughty)
 - God loves us because of who He is not because of who we are (boom!)
 - We are, in light of God’s holiness, all together unlovable
 - He does not love us because we are loveable, He loves us because He is love

This is truly good news

- Luke 2:10-11
 The angel said to them, “I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Why is this Good News—why is this Christmas?

- Because:
 - If God’s love for us is not based on our being loveable—if it is not deserved—then it is greater than we could ever deserve or warrant in ourselves.
 - And: If you think God loves you because of you, then you will think God does not love you because of you
 - If you think God loves you because of what you do, then you will think He does not love you when you do wrong
 - If God’s love for us is not based on our being good—if it cannot be earned—then it will remain when we fail. If it cannot be earned it cannot be lost.

This is truly good news

- For how many of us often think, assume and feel: “Surely God cannot love me anymore”
- Or for the “nice”... you underestimated love (you think you deserve—but it is so much more than you could ever)

Isaiah 49:13-16

Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people and will have compassion on His afflicted.

But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me."

(But the Lord said) "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands..."

Jeremiah 31:3 (NASB)

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.

If God's love is based on who He is and not on who we are then God's love cannot fail!

- It is unconditional (unmerited, undeserved, unearned)
- It is a faithful love
- It is a covenantal love
 - On the night that He was betrayed: Jesus and the cup (Drink from it all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins)
 - God's love is based on an unbreakable covenant that is inaugurated and enforced and fulfilled by Him and Him alone
 - "Behold, I have inscribed you upon the palms of my hands"
 - Romans 5:8 (demonstrated)

John 3:16-17

16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, **that whoever believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

17 For God **did not send the Son into the world to judge** the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

The naughty and the nice would prefer a judgment

- The **nice does not sweat** it—"I will be shown to be good!"
- The **naughty is willing to sweat** for it—"I will make myself good!"
- Religious impulse wants to earn and display

But the one who is truly prepared for the love of God knows

- God gave (Cf. Isaiah 9:6—**For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given**)
- We must only **believe**
- It is not about naughty or nice—it is about God's covenantal love that has brought us grace and peace

The judgment is to be sweated—but Christ has done the sweating for us

- Gethsemane (any other way)
- What about judgment day for you?

Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-7, 12-13 (NLT)

¹ "Is anyone thirsty?

Come and drink—

even if you have no money!

Come, take your choice of wine or milk—

it's all free!

² Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength?

Why pay for food that does you no good?

Listen to me, and you will eat what is good.

You will enjoy the finest food.

³ "Come to me with your ears wide open.

Listen, and you will find life.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you.

I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David...

⁶ Seek the LORD while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.
⁷ Let the wicked change their ways
 and banish the very thought of doing wrong.
 Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them.
 Yes, turn to our God, **for he will forgive generously.**

¹² You will live in joy and peace.
 The mountains and hills will burst into song,
 and the trees of the field will clap their hands!
¹³ Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow.
 Where nettles grew, myrtles will sprout up.
 These events will bring great honor to the LORD's name;
 they will be **an everlasting sign of his power and love."**

There are some gifts you will give this Christmas because, well, you just have to

- But there are other gifts you will give because you love to! Because you love that person
- You know the difference when you get them...

Advent then, is making room for the love of God

- 1. In realizing that it has already been brought to us in the Incarnation and Cross of Christ—enjoy it!
 - Ephesians 2:4-7
- 2. In realizing that it will be fully displayed when Christ comes again—live like it!

1 John 2:28-3:3 (NASB)

28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that **when He appears**, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame **at His coming**.
29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.
3:1 **See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us**, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.
2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that **when He appears**, we will be like Him, because **we will see Him just as He is**.
3 **And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

Expecting a baby... (love made manifest—fully loved and fully loving)