

## ***The Gift of Love - Romans 5:1-11*** **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

### **Notes from the Sermon**

To be loved is one of the deepest longings of human existence. And there are a million voices trying to speak into how this longing can be fulfilled. But one very iconic example that is timely for us right now would be the 1965 classic *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. The episode starts out with Charlie Brown expressing in his depressed state that he just doesn't understand the meaning of Christmas. Then he bemoans the fact that no one has sent him a Christmas card; he feels as empty as his mailbox when he says "I know nobody likes me; why do we have to have a holiday season to emphasize it?" Throughout the entire program characters are seen trying to fulfill the empty space with whatever their hearts desire, but Charlie Brown is always left longing. That is, until Linus reads the story of the birth of Christ from Luke 2. At that point, Charlie Brown seems to finally get it, and seemingly so do his friends.

It may be a bit pressing to wring out of this illustration that what Charlie Brown finally "got" was the explicit gospel story that the only love that truly fulfills comes from The Lord, which was shown to us by sending God the son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, as a baby boy into space and time here on earth, who would live the perfect life you and I could not, died on a cross, rose again 3 days later, ascended to Heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father and will one day come again. But I do think we can see ourselves in Charlie Brown's character. I would propose that there is a universal longing to be fully known and still loved. At the end of the program, Charlie Brown is still his old wishy-washy self; but now he knows he is loved by a love that surpasses all others. And Romans 5:1-11 will show us much about the love of God.

Beginning with Romans 5:5, we see the phrase "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us". Water has been used many times in connection with the Holy Spirit in scripture, so the phrasing of God's love being poured into our hearts works quite well, as the Holy Spirit is how God internalizes the gift of His love in the heart of the believer. The word "poured" also illustrates the overabundance of God's love, similar to how Paul writes in Ephesians 3:18-19, praying that we would know "what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God." Jonathan Edwards called God's love "an ocean without shores or bottom," and we can see God's love is unbounded, unlimited, and unending.

In Romans 5:6-10, Paul illustrates our problem: we are weak, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God, and we are in need of a savior who would reconcile us. Through Romans 3:9 and 3:23, Paul clarifies it is not just gentiles with this problem, but ALL people. If that is the case, there is nothing in us that would cause God to love us. Are we doomed? No. What we see explained here in Romans 5 is that God, in love, saved us while we were still sinners, and while we were enemies. There is nothing lovely in us causing Him to love us, and yet He loves us anyway. And that is simply because of who He is. His love is unconditional, uninfluenced, and undeserved.

In Romans 5:7-8, we see Paul talk about how it would be very difficult to find someone willing to die for a righteous person. He goes a step further in reminding us that it would be unfathomable for someone to die for an enemy. But this is indeed what God has done for us in sending His son Jesus Christ, who paid the price for our sins on the cross. This is the true sense of God's love as the word used in the New Testament (agape) illustrates. Agape is a love that is: unconditional, sacrificial, self-giving. It is a love based on choice, not emotion or impulse, and meant for the good of another. And this is meant to show us how entirely different God's love is from ours. His love is unfathomable, unprecedented, and unmatched.

The Jesus Storybook Bible's writer Sally Lloyd-Jones gives us a fantastic description of God's love when she says it is "a never-stopping, never giving up, always and forever love." This reminds me of the word used in the Old Testament *Hesed*, which is often translated as steadfast love, mercy, or loving kindness. I think we can see a glimpse of this unstoppable love in Romans 5:9-10, where Paul argues

twice that if God has justified us through Christ's blood, He will surely complete the act of saving us from His wrath. And if He reconciled us when we were enemies by the death of His son, He will surely keep us and save us by his life. These portray God's love as finishing our salvation, keeping the promises we talked about last week. Paul goes on in Romans 8:31-39 to flesh this out more, showing how God displays a love that is unfailing, unceasing, and unstoppable.

Upon looking deeply at the love of God proven on the cross of Christ, our hope is that you will see Him as great and worthy of your love. Embrace the moments you are given this Advent season to see the gift of God's love in the baby in the manger, and know that Jesus is the tangible embodiment of love manifested in flesh - fully God, fully man - for you to know that you are fully known and still loved.

**Bible Reading for the Week**

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Matthew 3	Matthew 4	Matthew 5	Matthew 6	Matthew 7	Matthew 8	Matthew 9

Reading from this past week: Romans 5:1-11

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Romans 5:1-11

**Family Worship**

Song - *Angels from the Realms of Glory/Emmanuel*

<https://youtu.be/LHuQbv-lkQE>

Gospel Project

Unit: In Exile

Story: Jeremiah encouraged God's people

Big Picture Question: Where is God?

Answer: God is in all places at all times and is always with His people.

Scripture: Jeremiah 29-30

New City Catechism

Question #49: Where is Christ now?

Answer: Christ rose bodily from the grave on the third day after his death and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Verse: Ephesians 1:20-21

Scripture

Romans 5:1-11

- How does the world define love?
- How is God's love different from our love?
- How does God prove His love for us?
- How has the love of God been shown to you in your life? Have you been changed by His love?
- What are some of your favorite examples of God's love displayed in the Bible?

Prayer

\*This is the second week of Advent. If you have a family advent wreath, light the second candle and give thanks for how the love of God was made known in the person of Jesus.

\*Pray for our Gift of Love Christmas Store this coming weekend, and for the families we are honored to serve.