

“See What Kind of Love”

1 John 3:1a, “*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*”

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin with an opening question to get us thinking together. My question is: When you hear the word “God,” what’s the first picture that comes to your mind? And I mean your *real* first picture, not the one you think you’re supposed to say at church.

For some people, God is like... a strict teacher with a giant red pen, ready to circle every mistake. For others, He’s like a distant landlord, you only hear from Him... when you didn’t pay your rent. But others hear “God” and think of comfort. A gentle parent who *really* cares.

And if we’re being honest, a lot of us in this room... we’re not entirely sure what to think. Some of us are excited to be here. Some of us have questions. Some are curious. Some of us are here because someone promised dinner afterward. But every one of us walked in ... with *some* picture of God.

And today, John begins with one simple invitation: “See.” It’s like he’s saying, “Slow down. Look closely. Don’t rush past this.” See what?

“*See what kind of love the Father has given to us.*” Not what kind of rules. Not what kind of duties. Not what kind of expectations. *What kind of love.*

That phrase “what kind” doesn’t mean “what category.” In the original language it means something like, “of what foreign kind,” or “from what foreign country.”

It basically means: “Where did *this* come from??” This isn’t the love we are used to. And honestly, it’s probably not the love we expected from God. But it might just be the love we’ve been needing all along.

Before we talk about anything else, I want to simply invite you to *see*, to look again, maybe for the first time in a long time, at the kind of love God gives. Not the love we wish He would show. Not the love we sometimes imagine. But the love He actually gives. May God help us see His love today.

SECTION 2: OUR REALITY AND EXPECTATIONS OF GOD’S LOVE

When John says, “See what kind of love,” he is saying: ‘Look at this love in contrast to everything else around you.’ And let’s be honest, when we look around, what do we actually

see? We see a world that feels heavy. Some of us walked in here... smiling on the outside but carrying a whole backpack of stress on the inside.

For some, it's financial pressure or family tension. For others, it's health issues, loneliness, grief, or uncertainty about the future. And some of us are just tired. Really tired. The kind of tired that sleep doesn't fix. And in moments like that, we all have some kind of expectation of what God's love *should* look like.

We start thinking, "If God really loves me, He'd change my situation." "If God really loves me, He wouldn't allow all this suffering." "If God really loves me, He'd open this door... or at least answer my prayers faster than Amazon Prime delivery." We expect God's love to show up with big results. Flashy results. Overnight results. Same day delivery.

But Christmas tells us a very different story. When God chose to show His love, He didn't show up with fireworks. He didn't show up riding on a cloud with angels carrying trumpets and banners saying, "Attention everyone! God is here!" Instead, He came in a way that almost *everyone missed*.

SECTION 3: THE HUMBLE MANGER

Picture this: the King of the universe, God Himself, comes into the world as a baby. Not in a hospital. Not in a nice home. Not even in a regular bed. Mary lays Him in something animals ate out of. He is born in a place that smelled like animals. Such a *humble* arrival. And who are the first people who hear about His birth? Was it the good people? Important figures of history? People in power? Nope. *Shepherds* (Luke 2:10). Back then, shepherds lived outside. They were easy to ignore. And yet, God sends angels *straight to them*. *See the kind of love that reaches unlikely places and unlikely people!*

None of this matches what we expect from God's love. Let me ask you, if *you* were in charge of preparing God's arrival, how would you do it? We'd say, 'Let's go big. Let's go bold. Book the best hospital, get Him a king size bed, there's going to be food for everyone, Korean bulgogi and salad, live music by Hillsong Worship, CPD blocking off the streets, and a red carpet from Northwestern Hospital all the way to His mansion in Evanston. Let's make it impossible for people to miss.'

But God does the opposite. He doesn't come with applause. He comes in silence. No baby shower. No welcome party. Just a quiet, humble beginning in the middle of a world full of darkness. He doesn't come where everyone is looking. He comes where *no one* is looking.

And maybe *that's the point*. Because what if He came in a flashy, impressive way? It would be intimidating to approach Him, don't you think? And most of us would actually *miss* Him. We would think, "Well, that's for the special people. The spiritual people." But He comes in a way that reaches all of us. The manger shows us a kind of love that goes to the *poorest* places, the *loneliest* places, the most *unfair* places.

SECTION 4: FREE GIFT

And that's how Jesus came. But Christmas isn't just about *how* He came. It's about *why* He came. Jesus' humble arrival is the beginning of a gift God is giving to the world.

John 3:16 puts it simply, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.*" He gave His Son. God didn't loan His Son. He didn't send Him on a short visit. Out of love, God gave His Son fully.

Why did He give His Son? John 3:17 explains it: "*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.*" Think about that. You guys saw the little kids' angel dance earlier right? So cute! So let me ask you... If God came to condemn us, would He come as a fragile little baby? In such a cute, humble way? No. He came gently because His goal was rescue, not rejection. Jesus is God's gift to us!

And that means something important: *this gift was not earned*. Think about how gifts work. Let me ask you... This Christmas, how much do you pay your close friends for the gifts they give? Zero dollars. Nada. 공짜 (gong-jja). That was my Korean with a Madagascar accent. It means free... I think.

You don't pay to receive a gift. If your friend says, "Hey, I got you a gift... but you have to pay," - huh?? that's not a friend, that's a scam! A gift is *not earned*. A gift is *given freely*, and it's *received with open hands*. God's gift of love is Jesus, His only Son.

SECTION 5: THE CROSS

We may say, wow, this gift is awesome, *and* it's free!? Free for us, yes, but this gift was *not* cheap.

When Jesus is born, the angel says in Luke 2, "*Today, in the city of David, a Savior has been born to you.*" (v11) A Savior. Not a teacher. Not a prophet. Not a motivational speaker. A Savior. That word tells us something: our problem was much bigger than we like to admit. Something was deeply broken between us and God.

And if that's true, if we really needed a Savior, then rescue was never going to be easy or painless. You see, the humility of the manger was *always* pointing somewhere... to the cross. You might be thinking 'The cross again? Victor it's Christmas, not Easter!' ... I know, just give me a moment, this is very important.

The same Son God sends to the manger is the Son He sends to the cross. If the baby in the manger doesn't end up on the cross, Christmas *doesn't* really make sense. The reality is, this baby was born... to go to the cross. Why?

On the cross, sinless Jesus takes our sins upon Himself, and receives the punishment that we deserve, so we can be forgiven. The gift of Christmas leads straight to the cost of the cross. And it's there that God's love shines the brightest! See what kind of love!

And who are we, that God would love us like this? Romans 5:8 says it plainly: *“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Sinners. When God sent His Son, we were not His friends. We were not His children. The Bible tells us we were His *enemies*.

And still, God loved us and gave His Son. Who does that? Who gives up their beautiful, sinless, precious Son for people who will reject Him, mock Him, and crucify Him?

This is why John says, “See what kind of love this is.” This love doesn’t make sense by human standards. It’s costly. It’s sacrificial. And it’s real.

SECTION 6: WWI STORY

It’s hard for us to imagine that kind of love, a love that moves toward enemies. And there is a story from history that helps us picture it. In 1914, during World War I, *something* happened that became known as the *Christmas Truce*. Have you guys heard about it? Picture this: Two armies sitting in muddy trenches, just a few hundred feet apart. It’s freezing. They’re hungry, exhausted, and honestly, most of them think they might not make it home.

On Christmas Eve, some German soldiers started singing *“Silent Night.”* Then guess what?

British soldiers joined in from the other side, “Holy night.” The next morning, unbelievably, soldiers from both sides stepped out of their trenches. They shook hands. They shared food. They showed each other pictures of their families. Some even played soccer. For a moment, in the middle of war, archenemies laid down their weapons.

No one ordered it. No one planned it. You see...*something* about Christmas, the message that God entered our dark world, was strong enough to break through even a battlefield! It was a *small* picture of the kind of love that moves toward enemies.

SECTION 7: CHILDREN OF GOD

And here’s where God’s love goes even further: God doesn’t just make a temporary peace with us. He calls us His children! John says: *“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.”* Children of God. That’s more than forgiveness. That’s family!

Family?... Oftentimes, our circumstances make us think that God’s love isn’t that personal. But does God just love you from a distance? Does He just forgive you from above and say, ‘Good luck’? No. Through Jesus, through receiving Him, He actually makes you His child. He brings you into His family. He gives you a new identity.

This love was not cheap. It cost Jesus everything. So when John says “children of God,” that’s not just a spiritual title. It’s real. It means you belong to Him. It means He cares for you, He’s not ashamed of you. It means you’re not an outsider. You’re not someone God just tolerates. You’re His child, born of God! (John 1:12-13)

Jesus even says in John 17, “*so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*” (v23b) God loves us like His Son Jesus. ‘Yeah but Jesus is the favorite child.’ No, God doesn’t have a favorite child. God loves you like He loves His Son Jesus. In some families, it’s like ‘oh hey Georgie, hey Matthew, hi Ashton’... like there is a favorite child... but in God’s family, every child is His favorite. Every believer who has received Jesus... is like God’s one and only child.

Do you believe it? Because John adds, “*And so we are,*” almost like he knows we will struggle to believe it. Almost like he knows some of us think, ‘Well, maybe God loves people in general, but not me. Not with my history. Not with my mistakes. Not with my doubts.’ But John says, ‘No. You really are His precious child. He sees you as His precious baby girl, or precious baby boy. This is who you are now.’

So let me ask you: if when we were His enemies, He gave us His Son out of love, then now that we are His children, how much more will He give us?

If when we were His enemies. He forgave our sins, then now that we are His children, will He reject us because of our flaws?

The baby in the manger grows up to bring outsiders into God’s family. And I’ve seen that love in my own life.

SECTION 8: TESTIMONY

When I finished my Master’s at Loyola in 2023, I expected to get a good job right away. After graduation, two companies called me. Both were interested, until they learned I was an international student. Each one said, ‘Sorry, we don’t give visa sponsorship. Contact us when you have a green card.’ After that, rejection after rejection followed. Early 2024 was one of the lowest seasons of my life. I watched everyone around me move forward, and I asked God, ‘You say You love me... but all I’m asking for is a job.’

People in church encouraged me and prayed for me. Dr. Paul Koh even told me, ‘Do not worry, God has the best thing prepared for you,’ and then he promised that if God didn’t, he would give me his house on North Rockwell street. He made that promise without talking to his wife, so he might be sleeping on the couch tonight. But it reminded me how blessed I am to have loving children of God around me.

But the turning point came when a friend shared Philippians 2 with me; how Jesus, who is fully God, made Himself nothing for us. That’s when I realized something. I wanted God’s love to show up as quick answers and easy solutions. But the real love God gives is Himself. When this baby came into the world, I didn’t bring anything to Him. He didn’t owe me anything. Yet He gave me everything, He gave me Himself! That’s when I realized my standard for God’s love was way too low.

So I repented of my self-centered way of thinking. And you know what? After that moment, my job situation, nothing changed. But God changed me. He changed my attitude. God gave me

hope, peace, and joy in the waiting, because I could finally see that he loves me just like he loves Jesus.

SECTION 9: SIMPLE INVITATION

And today, I want to give a simple invitation, not heavy, no pressure. Just an invitation. Maybe this Christmas, God is asking you to slow down and look again. To see His love in a new way. To see that He is not far. Maybe today, He's inviting you to stop trying to carry everything on your own and simply come near to Him. He is inviting you to accept His gift to become his precious child by believing in Jesus.

SECTION 10: CONCLUSION

So in conclusion, let's go back to John's invitation: "*See what kind of love the Father has given to us.*" Christmas gives us a clearer picture of God, a deeply loving parent who comes close and calls us His children. And because of Jesus, you don't have to guess what God is like. You can just look at the manger, and the cross, and see His love. Let's read our verse together again: "*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*" This Christmas, May God help us look at the manger and see His love. May God make His light shine in our darkness.