



Love Came Down – God’s Gift of Love

Date: Sunday 11th December 2022

Speaker: Adam Pipe (City Centre) // Jeff Stamps (South).

Key Verses: 1 John 4:9-10

Talk Summary:

- 1. God took the initiative.** In sending us the gift of Jesus his son **God took the initiative.** The best presents we have are the ones where the giver knows just what we need and want and they take the initiative and give it to us. The message of Christmas is that God took the initiative to reach out to us and give us the best gift ever the gift of his son.
- 2. Because he loves us.** When we read John’s letter we can see exactly why God took the initiative and sent us Jesus it is **because he loves us.** God loves each one of us so much that he gave his one and only Son to die for us. Jesus’ death on the cross is the greatest demonstration of love that there is. As one writer (Michael Eaton) said, ‘*Christ’s death is the ‘pledge’ of God’s love*’. The New Testament was written in Greek which has a number of words for love such as *philia* for love of friends, *storge* for family love and *eros* for romantic love. But the word John is using here is *agape*. Agape love is the highest form of love, it is the love that gives itself for others. It is this *agape* love that defines God’s character. John goes on to say in his letter that (4:16) that, ‘*God is love*’. Those of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus are called to live lives that are defined by self-giving love.
- 3. So that we could have life.** John goes on to say that God sent his son to take away our sins **so that we could have life.** Jesus died on the cross to set us free from sin because ultimately sin leads to death. But God’s gift of love in Jesus leads to life. Life in all its fullness. Life as it was meant to be. People often think that followers of Jesus just believe in going to heaven when you die. But actually it is far more than that. It is about living a life to the full now in relationship with God. That doesn’t mean that life will be all sunsets and rainbows. For a lot of us 2022 has been a hard year throughout all of those hard and difficult times knowing that the love of God is with you and for you. In the Old Testament there is a verse which speaks about the coming of Jesus which says he will be called Immanuel. At Christmas we sing carols containing that name Immanuel. Immanuel is two Hebrew words squished together ‘Immanu’ ‘with us’ and ‘El’ ‘God’. Whatever you are facing this Christmas know that ‘with us’ ‘God’.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? (Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- Go around and tell each other the best Christmas present you have ever been given?
- What stood out for you from the talk from Sunday?
- To what extent is our character defined by self-giving love? Where do we need to grow in love?
- Discuss practical ways that we can demonstrate self-giving love to our colleagues, neighbours and families this Christmas.
- What does it mean that Jesus came to give us life?
- Share with each other where you are finding life challenging at the moment and need to know 'Immanuel' the 'with us God'.

Witness - How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?

Other Notices:

- Don't forget we have a bring & share lunch after our AM services this weekend! Bring something delicious to share!