

Wanted: People Who Care
From the Advent Series “Holiday Season Want Ads”
By Phil Brainerd
Presented to Trinity Church of Teaneck, NJ
On Sunday, December 20, 2020

Introduction

I once knew a man who owned a business. The business opened every day at 9 AM. He was often there much earlier, sometimes hours earlier. He also stayed late at night after closing time. He worked long and hard. This was a man whose business was very important to him.



One time, he shared with me something about his work. For some reason, it wasn't unusual to find things that weren't done very well.

He would constantly run into situations where his employees got careless. I recall what he said: “Why is it that I have so much trouble finding people who care about their job?”

“People who care about their job.” Apparently, that's a hot topic in the business world. I ran into some articles about that. Forbes publishes one of the most-read business magazines in the world. They recently ran an article with this title:

“4 Ways To Inspire Employees To Care About Their Work And The Company”
(Feb 1, 2018, 05:30pm EST)

Another big business magazine is “Inc” (short for “Incorporated”). Here's one of their articles:

“10 Reasons Employees Really Care About Their Jobs”
(MAR 20, 2014)

So, it seems a lot of businesses have trouble with employees who don't care about their work or the company that hires them. Maybe they should post a want ad? We're in our series, “Holiday Season Want Ads”. Today's want ad is: “Wanted: People who care”.

We all like people who care. Companies want workers who care about their jobs. However, here's something even more important: ***We like it when people care about us.*** If you can find someone who truly cares about you, you've found something very valuable. In the holiday

season, we're reminded that someone very important cares about us. He care about you. That someone is God.

Here's a well-known statement from the Bible:

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

Why does God care about us? For the most important reason of all - Because he loves us. In the Advent season, we celebrate Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love. Today, we'll look at: Love.

Would you like to know something interesting? The word "Love" doesn't appear anywhere in the Christmas story. When you look at the Christmas story, the other themes are easy to find.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10 -emphasis mine)

The Christmas angel announced two of the themes here. "Good News" implies hope. We also see hope from the prophecies of Scripture that we've discussed in our series. Certainly, we see "Joy" announced by the angel.

Later, more angels appear.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (vs 13-14 - emphasis mine)

Here, we see a clear announcement of peace. Hope, Peace, and Joy are easy to find in the Christmas story. However, the word "love" doesn't actually appear there. So, why do we include it in the Advent season? We include it because "love" is the root of almost everything else at Christmas.

Let's learn some things about love as it appears in the Bible, and as it relates to the Christmas story. For the regulars, some of this will be familiar - But not all. There will be a few surprises along the way. If not surprises, I hope we will expand our knowledge of God's love.

Let's start with the familiar:

I. Love is the root of everything else in the Christmas Story

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Love is why God sent his Son to us. Love is why his Son was born as a human baby. Love is why God sent the angels to announce the birth of his Son. Love is why he sent a star to guide the wise men. Love is why God planned all this long before it happened - That's why he could announce it centuries before in Bible prophecy.

Why does God love?

God is love (1 John 4:8)

God is love – Love is one of the things that makes God who he is. So, love is at the root of almost everything in the Christmas story.

Let's ask some questions. First, what is this love? Here's a tougher one: Do you understand love? If you have trouble with those questions, you're not alone. Love is hard to fully define or understand.

Why is that? We have trouble understanding love because our world is broken. In a broken world, there is no perfect love. To find perfect love, we need to look somewhere else. We need to look one who is perfect. We need to look to God.

To learn about this, we could study what the Bible has to say about God's love. But God offers us something better; something wonderful. God offers us the opportunity to meet him. God wants to open his heart and his mind to us. Let's take him up on that. We can't learn everything about God and his love in one session, but we'll hit some important points.

As we said, most people who have spent time in church know that God is love, and that love made him send his Son. Here's something you might not have known.

II. God Love His Glory

God loves his glory. Did you know that? Let's read about it.

For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to destroy you completely. (Isaiah 48:9)

Listen: This is God talking to us. Look at what he says: "For **my own** name's sake **I** delay my wrath." Why does he do that? Why does he withhold wrath?

See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. (Isaiah 48:10-11)

God loves his glory. He zealously protects it. We're told, he will not yield his glory to another.

God's glory is a big topic. It's something we don't talk about enough. One of the reasons we don't talk about it is that it's hard to understand. It's kind of like the difference between describing baseball and describing beauty. If you meet someone who doesn't know what baseball is, you can say things like:

- There's this ball about the size of your palm.
- One person throws it.
- Another person tries to hit it with a big stick.
- And so on.

Describing beauty is harder. If someone asks, "What is beauty?" You can only say that certain things look good to us. Flowers look good, so flowers have beauty. Sunsets look good, so a sunset has beauty. A pile of rocks – not so much.

What I want to do in in this article is introduce us to God's glory. We'll start by saying that it's very important to him. We'll learn more about it and why it's important once we get back to our regular message series after the Advent holiday. Today we just need to understand two things.

- 1) God's glory is the reason we praise his name.
- 2) Glory one of the reasons that God makes an offer of peace to mankind.

Look at what we just read:

For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to destroy you completely. (Isaiah 48:9)

God's glory is part of the reason that he is led to forgive when he has been offended. Instead of wrath, he offers peace. And that's why God's glory plays an important role in the Christmas story. Let's re-read a well-known passage with that in mind.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:13-14)

God loves his glory. The offer of peace that God makes to mankind in the Christmas story is part of that glory.

As we learn more about God, as we meet him together, we'll learn more about God's glory. Why? Because it's important. Here's what the apostle Paul said:

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (I Corinthians 10:31)

God loves his glory. Let's move on now and look at some other aspects of God's love.

III. God the Father Loves God the Son

God the Father loves his son, Jesus. We learn about this on the day that Jesus was Baptized.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:16-17)

Once again, we're meeting God. God is allowing us to listen to him speak. We're listening in on a conversation. God says, "This is my Son, **whom I love**." God the Father loves God the Son. Why is this important? Of course, it's important because it's true. We just heard God say it. It's also important because it shows us how much God loves us. We started by quoting John 3:16 where we're told that God loved the world so much that he gave his Son.

Sending Jesus to the earth was no small thing. Jesus lived in the comfort and beauty of heaven. He was surrounded by angels who worshipped him day and night. We will never know what it took for the infinite God to become a baby in the womb. Whatever it took, it was immense. More than that, it was a great sacrifice. Jesus was born into a poor family. He had to go through all the things humans go through. Was he ever bullied, or did other children make fun of him? Most children go through those experiences. We know that at some point, the Scriptures stop including talk of his earthly father, Joseph. This which means his earthly father died at some point, leaving the oldest child, Jesus, to take care of the family. He had to work long hours as a carpenter to do that. Once Jesus started his public ministry, we know that he was often misunderstood and mocked. Eventually, he went through the torture of death by crucifixion. God the Father knew all this would happen to his Son when he commanded him to go to the earth.

When you love someone, it's hard to send them into a situation where they will experience pain. Yet, that's what God did. So, it's important for us to understand that God the Father loves God the Son. It helps us to understand the love that he has for us.

So, God commanded his Son to do things, some of which were very painful. This raises another question: Why did Jesus obey his Father?

IV. God the Son Loves God the Father.

Jesus obeyed his Father for two reasons. First, Jesus, the Son of God, loves his Father.

...I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. (John 14:31)

We've heard from God the Father. Now, we hear from God the Son. Once again, we're listening in on a conversation between Jesus and his followers. Jesus says, "I love my Father". "Because I love my Father, I do exactly what he commands."

"Exactly" - Have you ever asked somebody for something, and they give you half of what you ask for? Jesus does what his father commands. Exactly what his father commands. Why? Because of love.

Here's where perfect love comes in. If we ask for something here on earth, we often get it imperfectly because on earth, we only have imperfect motivations. Jesus doesn't only love his Father. He has perfect love. Perfect love has only one goal: To please the one you love. That's it. Perfect love gives and expects nothing in return.

That's how Jesus feels about his father. Another way of saying "please" is "to make happy". Because Jesus wants to please his father, to make his Father happy, he does exactly what he is commanded - Even if it's hard - Even if it's very painful.

God the Son loves God the Father.

As we said, there are two reasons that Jesus does what his Father says. Here's the second reason.

V. God the Son loves the people whom his Father loves.

Jesus loves humans. He probably loves us just because he does. But we're also told that his Father's love for him is part of his motivation.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. (John 15:9)

Once again, we're meeting Jesus. Again, we're listening in on a conversation. This is Jesus speaking from his heart. God the Son loves the people whom his Father loves. And once again, this is perfect love. This is love that seeks the best and highest for the object of love. It is a love that gives and expects nothing in return.

Jesus obeyed his Father's commands because of love. Jesus obeyed even when it was hard and painful. The people who received the benefits of that obedience are you and me. What did Jesus get out of his obedience? Joy.

For the joy set before him he endured the cross... (Hebrews 12:2)

Because of love, Jesus only needed two things to endure the cross. 1) The knowledge that it would make his Father happy. 2) The knowledge that the cross allows God to offer salvation to all mankind. Those things brought joy to Jesus. That's perfect love.

Our Response

There's a lot of love going on here. God loves all of us. God loves his glory. God loves his Son. The son loves the Father. Because the Father loves the Son, the Son loves us.

So, how do we respond to all this?

First, we need to believe all this. Getting back to the first Bible verse that we read.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

You must believe that God loves you. He loves you so much that he was willing to send his Son, whom he dearly loves for you. God does not want you to perish but have everlasting life.

This brings up yet another question: Why would you perish? We are all in danger of perishing because of sin. God didn't send Jesus to the earth to throw a party. God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins.

You must recognize that you have a problem of sin. You must be willing to turn from your sins. The word for that is "repent". If you'll do that - If you'll repent and believe in Jesus, you can enjoy God's love for all eternity.

Let us tell you how you can enjoy God's love by believing in Jesus Christ. See the end of this article for more information.

Jesus tells us what to do after that.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. (John 15:9)

You don't learn about God's love by accepting this and running away. You must hang around. You must learn to remain in God's love. Some translations say "Abide".

How do you do that?

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:9-11)

As I said earlier, we live in a broken world. There is no perfect love down here, so you can't learn about it by focusing on this world. You need to focus on the perfect God. You need to meet him. You need to spend time with him.

You must learn the commands of Jesus. You must become a disciple. If you do that, you can learn about Joy. You can learn the kind of love that gives to others and to God, expecting nothing in return. You can learn to experience the joy that only comes when you understand the perfect love that exists in the heart of God.

Let's pull this all together.

Conclusion

We started with a common problem: Workers who don't care about their work. So we posted a holiday season want ad:

"Wanted: People who care."

Let's change the ad:

"Wanted: People who know the love of God."

God has a lot of Jobs. There is one job that he considers to be very important. That job is you. Believe me, God cares about that job. He cares because he loves you. God is love.

Let him love you. Believe in him. Repent! Turn from you sins. Remain in him. Abide in him.

If you do, you can experience the Joy of God's perfect love.