

Advent IV Love December 20, 2020

Love.....is there anything we haven't already heard about love?

According to the Ancient Greeks, there are 8 Types of Love.

1. Agape — Jesus exhibited this kind of love for all humans. He was selfless and sacrificed Himself for others. Some of us have this kind of love for others.

2. Eros — Eros is named after the Greek god of love and fertility. It is usually associated with romantic, passionate, love

3. Philia — The Greeks defined this kind of love as “affectionate love.” In other words, it is the kind of love that you feel for your friends. Plato always argued that physical attraction wasn't necessary for love. This is often referred to as “platonic” love.

4. Philautia —Philautia is self-love. In our modern day society, most people associate self-love with being narcissistic, selfish, or stuck on themselves. However, this is not what the ancient Greeks intended. Self-love is necessary if we are going to be able to

receive love from other people. And, we cannot give to others what we don't have.

5. Storge — Storge can be defined as “familiar love.” This type of love looks and feels a lot like philia – affectionate love felt between friends. Like philia, with storge, there is a strong bond, kinship, and familiarity between people.

6. Pragma — The ancient Greeks define pragma as “enduring love’. When we see elderly couples who still hold hands, that’s a great example of pragma.

7. Ludus —Ludus is known as the “playful love.” It’s the butterflies in your stomach, the giddiness you feel when you see your love walk through the door.

8. Mania —Mania is not a healthy type of love. It is obsessive. This type of love can lead someone into madness, jealousy, or even anger. Many people who experience this type of love suffer from low self-esteem. They fear losing the object of their love, and

this fear compels them to say or do some “crazy” things in order to keep them. Mania can be very destructive.

The 5 Love Languages

In a nutshell, in his book **The Five Love Languages**, **Gary Chapman** argues that each of us receives the message that we are loved, in primarily one or two ways, out of a possibility of 5.

And they are as follows:

1. Words of Affirmation - Some people interpret their partner giving them lots of compliments as being loved.

2. Acts of Service - Some people feel loved when someone does things to help them.

3. Receiving Gifts - If you measure your partner’s love by how many gifts you are given, then your love language is “receiving gifts.”

4. Quality Time - Spending lots of time together, being listened to, makes some people feel loved.

5. Physical Touch - Finally, some individuals associate love with physical touch. When your partner holds your hand, or cuddles you, you interpret that as love.

Chapman suggests that while we all enjoy and appreciate most of these love languages, each of us has a primary and a secondary love language.....behaviours of others that make us feel particularly loved. The challenge is, to learn the language of those around you, and speak their love languages to them! Hopefully they will learn and speak your love languages to you!

Today, I want to focus on **love** in 4 unique relationships at Christmas.

The first is **Joseph's love for Mary**. Yes, they were engaged. And in those days, an engagement was considered much the same as a marriage, but before the official ceremony. We would

assume they loved each other. But we are looking through the filter of the 21st century. In Biblical times, people got married for lots of different reasons. Marriages were typically arranged by parents and marriage was often viewed as a social or economic relationship, rather than a romantic one.

I choose to believe that Joseph loved Mary - this is why. While they were engaged, Mary discovered she was pregnant, but she and Joseph had not had a sexual relationship. Joseph must have assumed that Mary had been unfaithful to him. He must have felt hurt, betrayed, perhaps angry. He could have easily walked away, knowing that the child was not his. He could have dragged Mary before a tribunal and had her tried for adultery. Mary would have been disgraced and probably been put to death by stoning. Instead, Joseph decided to divorce her quietly.

We know how important dreams are in the Bible...and in our own lives. In a dream, an angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph and told

him not to be afraid but to take Mary as his wife. He did.

Joseph's love for Mary is our first example of love at Christmas!

Let's consider **Mary's love for Jesus**

Mary, a young teen, gives birth to her firstborn son, she wraps him in swaddling cloths, and lays him in a manger. Can you imagine that scene, gathered in that stable, or cave....some very primitive setting...the smells of fresh straw, the sounds of the animals, the darkness of the night? Luke tells us about the visit of the shepherds to the manger, and after their visit, how they raced about, spreading word to the townspeople of what they had just witnessed! Then we read this - "Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart." Treasuring, pondering.....Well, she had much to ponder. Not long ago, she had spoken to the angel Gabriel....her first conversation with an angel ever!

Consider the message that angel brought her.....don't be afraid Mary, the Lord has chosen you to give birth to the one who will

change the world forever!! Looking in that manger, Mary had much to treasure and to ponder!

Remember Simeon....the old man in the temple....when he saw Joseph and Mary with the baby, he took the child in his arms and praised God....Simeon knew in that moment that he was holding the salvation of the world. Mary and Joseph heard and saw what the wise priest was saying and doing....they were amazed! Simeon warned Mary that her son's path would be difficult and that it would be painful for her as well. Mary had knelt by the manger. Later she would stand at the foot of the cross. Simeon's words had come to pass. Love at Christmas.

The third aspect of love that comes from the Christmas story is **God's love for you and for me** – At the end of chapter 1 of Matthew, the angel tells Joseph and Mary that their soon to be born son, will save God's people from their sins! God loves his people so much that he sent his one and only son into the world, to be born, to live, and to die, and to rise from the dead, so that we

might have eternal life! Jesus did not merely **come** into the world, he was **sent** into the world from God, not to condemn the world, but to save it.

If you ever doubt that God loves you, consider the baby in the manger. Look at the man that child grew into, teaching preaching, healing, welcoming all people into his presence. Look at that man being accused, beaten, and put to death on the cross, dying, being buried, and ascending from the dead....for you.....so that where you are, He will also be there. Paul writes in Romans, that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

The Christmas story is about love. **Joseph's love for Mary. Mary's love for the baby Jesus. God's love for us....and lastly, one more love – our love for one another.**

The Bible makes the unbreakable connection between God's love for us and our love for one another. "Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." "Whatever you do for the least of

these my children, you do for me.” We are called to take care of each other. To find ways to give each other hope, and joy, to bring peace, and love. We only have the capacity to love, because God first loved us. God is the source of all love. You and I are conduits for God’s amazing grace and His amazing love....God’s love, flowing into our lives and flowing into the lives of others.... blessing after blessing. Passing on God’s love to those who it is easy to love and to those who it is not easy to love.

Sometimes you and I are not tremendously loveable. But God never gives up on us. God never stops loving us. I wonder if we can grow in our ability to never give up on each other....to never stop loving one another.

And so today, we light the final Advent Candle. We started with Hope, then Peace, Joy, and today Love. My encouragement today is this.....don’t ever put the Advent Candles Away. Don’t ever extinguish the flame from the Advent Candles. Oh of course you can do that literally, but not figuratively. We all need a little hope

and peace, and joy and love in our lives. We all need a little Christmas, and those simple advent candles serve to remind us what Christmas is all about. May we be able to receive the blessings of Advent and may we be prepared to find ways to pass those blessings on. May we speak the language of Christmas, all year long!

Go's grace and love to you,

Amen