

REDISCOVER

CHRISTMAS

GOOD NEWS IN TROUBLING TIMES

Finding Love In Our Differences

The word Advent means “coming” or “arrival,” and the season is marked by expectation, waiting, anticipation, and longing. Advent is not just an extension of Christmas—it is a season that links the past, present, and future.

Advent looks back in celebration at the hope fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s coming, while at the same time looking forward in hopeful and eager anticipation to the coming of Christ’s kingdom when He returns for His people. During Advent we wait for both—it’s an active, assured, and hopeful waiting

Fearless Love









- Love United

- Realize that the birth of Christ brings together a wide variety of people across many different divides and contrasts.
 - We start with Zechariah and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph—the old and the young.
 - Then we meet the shepherds and the angels—the beings of earth and of heaven, the physical and the spiritual.
 - And as they head to the stable, there are animals as well as humans, the beings of creation.
- When we look at Matthew's Christmas account and meet the Magi.

- The Mysterious visitors from the East
 - These Magi or Wise Men, often portrayed with the shepherds in the manger were not there at the birth of Christ.
 - Matthew 2:11 They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
 - The Magi appear to noble and wealthy men who demonstrate God bridging even more divides.
 - The Magi are the esteemed opposite to the lowly shepherds in human social structures.
 - But importantly, they are Gentiles, not Jews, and their inclusion in Jesus's birth account echoes the radical idea that Christ the Messiah brings salvation and restoration to all people, not just the Jews.

- **1. God's Rich Love - Christ is love embodied.**
- Jesus Christ is the bridge for God to us!
 - John 1:14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.
 - John 3:17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.
 - 1 Timothy 2:5-7 For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus. 6 He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message God gave to the world at just the right time.

- Me must cross the bridge Jesus made!
 - John 3:16 "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.
 - John 3:3-7 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." 4 "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" 5 Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. 6 Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. 7 So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again. NLT

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- **2. Love should define and propels us.**

- John 13:34-35 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." NLT
- How will people know that they are followers of Jesus? By the love they show to other people. You've heard this before. How will people know we are Christians? By our love.
- Love is what defines us. It marks us and characterizes us. At least it should.

- **3. We must follow Christs Example!**

- Wow, these are divided times. It seems our culture, our nation, our world, our people have multiplied the ways to divide us.
- It's why God's love is so radical. It's why Jesus's teaching was so radical. Listen to this:
 - Matthew 5:43-48 (The Message)



dreamstime.

- Jesus didn't only tear down the walls of division at His birth, He continuously reached across the chasm of separation and exclusion.
- Good Samaritan – Luke 10:30-35
- Jesus was crossing the divide. He reached across the cultural, spiritual, political, and racial divisions and today, calls us to do the same.
- **Once we have crossed the bridge we must also make or become bridges!**
 - *1 John 4:7-17 (The Message)*

- When we are in Christ building bridges is expected!
 - 1 John 4:19-21 (The Message)
- Jesus's love is fearless love that calls us and enables us to be bridge builders, not ditch diggers or wall builders!
- **Conclusion**
- There is a humility in love, a willingness to put someone else first.
- Sometimes love means taking the simple step of building that bridge as a gesture and an invitation.
- Sometimes it's being willing to listen and not defend.
- It is always being willing to choose to see someone else, not as "other," but as us, equally loved by God, equally welcomed into His presence, equally drawn into and propelled out of His miraculous, divine, all-consuming love.
- This is God's love. This is the gift of Christ. This is the heart of Christmas.

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THANK YOU

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