

“Love Takes Flesh”

Advent Week 4 — Love

Series: *The Dawn Is Breaking*

Texts: Isaiah 7:10-16 • Matthew 1:18-25 • Romans 1:1-7

Big Idea: *The ultimate sign of God’s love is Emmanuel -God with us.*

INTRO- WHEN WORDS AREN’T ENOUGH

- The word “**just**” often minimizes real presence:
 - “I’ll *just* text.”
 - “I’ll *just* check in.”
- Words matter—but there are moments when **mediated care isn’t enough**.
- Real love requires **embodied presence**.
- Advent reveals that God did not *just* send a message or reassurance.
- **God showed up**.
- Christmas celebrates love that did not remain theoretical or distant.
- **Emmanuel — God with us**.

I. ISAIAH 7 // LOVE AS GOD’S FAITHFUL PRESENCE

A. A Context of Fear, Not Festivity

- King Ahaz faces political threat and personal anxiety.
- God invites Ahaz to trust Him and even offers a confirming sign.
- Ahaz refuses, disguising unbelief as humility.

B. God Gives a Sign Anyway

- “The Lord himself will give you a sign...” (Isa 7:14).
- This is **grace**, not reward.
- God’s promise does not depend on human faithfulness.
- The sign: a child named **Immanuel**.

C. What the Sign Means

- God has not abandoned His people.
- The threat will not have the final word.
- The sign is **not**:
 - military power

- political strategy
- human control
- The sign **is presence**.
- God's love shows up *inside fear*, not by instantly removing it.
- The sign had an immediate meaning in Isaiah's day and a deeper fulfillment in Christ.

II. MATTHEW 1 // LOVE TAKES FLESH

A. Promise Fulfilled

- Matthew emphasizes fulfillment: "This took place to fulfill..."
- Isaiah's sign reaches its fullest meaning in Jesus.
- God's love becomes a **person**, not merely a promise.

B. Incarnation as Divine Commitment

- God does not save from a distance.
- He enters:
 - human vulnerability
 - bodily weakness
 - social risk
 - historical mess
- This is not God sending help; it is **God becoming help**.

C. Presence in the Middle of Brokenness

- Mary bears social cost.
- Joseph risks his reputation.
- Rome still rules.
- Life remains dangerous.
- Yet **God is with them**.
- Love is presence, not escape.
- God's love is embodied commitment.

III. JOSEPH // LOVE EXPRESSED THROUGH OBEDIENCE

A. A Disrupted Life

- Joseph's plans unravel.
- His future becomes uncertain.
- Social and legal expectations give him reason to walk away.

B. The Cost of Obedience

- Joseph stands in fear, confusion, and loss of control.
- Obedience offers no guarantee of ease, only faithfulness.
- Love is not primarily a feeling; **it is a response**.

C. Faithful Action

- Joseph listens, trusts, and acts.
- He stays. He protects. He obeys.
- Love sometimes means:
 - choosing faithfulness over self-protection
 - trusting God with a story you did not choose
- Joseph's obedience becomes part of how Emmanuel enters the world.
- God's incarnational love invites human participation.

IV. ROMANS 1 // LOVE ROOTED IN GOD'S FAITHFUL PROMISE

A. The Gospel as Promise Fulfilled

- Paul begins Romans with **story**, not instruction.
- The gospel is what God promised beforehand through the Scriptures.
- God's love is covenant faithfulness, not a change of heart.
- Christmas is not God beginning to love the world, it is God **arriving**.

B. Jesus Fully Human and Fully Divine

- Descended from David according to the flesh.
- Declared Son of God in power through the resurrection.
- God's love enters history, takes flesh, and fulfills ancient promises.
- The incarnation is the climax of covenant faithfulness.

C. Love That Reorients Allegiance

- The gospel produces "the obedience of faith."
- God's love:
 - creates loyalty
 - reshapes belonging
 - calls for response
- Love keeps promises, enters weakness, remains faithful, and calls forth allegiance.
- This is why Joseph's obedience matters—it is love responding to love.

V. WHAT BIBLICAL LOVE REALLY IS

A. Love as Self-Giving Presence

- Biblical love is cruciform and costly.
- God gives Himself rather than protecting comfort.
- Love is measured by **presence**, not intensity of feeling.

B. Love as Covenant Faithfulness

- To love is to stay.
- God's love is loyal, resilient, and enduring.
- Even when people fail, God does not walk away.

C. Love Moves Toward, Not Away

- God's love moves into mess, fear, and vulnerability.
- The incarnation closes distance and bridges gaps.
- Love enters brokenness to redeem it.

Summary Statement

- Biblical love is God's self-giving, promise-keeping presence that moves toward us and refuses to walk away.

VI. LIVING INCARNATIONAL LOVE

A. Receiving God's Love

- Before giving love, we receive Emmanuel.
- Where do you most need to hear, "God is with you"?

B. Love Shows Up

- Presence matters more than solutions.
- Practice embodied love:
 - choose one person this week to be fully present with
 - no fixing, no advising

C. Love Obeys Even When It Costs

- Love may disrupt plans and invite misunderstanding.
- Say yes to one small, inconvenient act of faithfulness.

D. Love as a Way of Life

- Advent ends with a calling, not a feeling.
- We become people who carry Emmanuel into the world.

GOD WITH US, STILL

- God did not shout His love; He whispered it in a manger.
- God did not love from a distance; **He came.**
- Emmanuel — God with us.
- Love that takes flesh, stays close, and gives itself.
- **The dawn has broken.**
Love has taken flesh.
And God is with us.