

The Advent Conspiracy – Love All
Matthew 25:34-40
GCF – December 6, 2009

I. Introduction

For the last three weeks we have been engaged in an Advent Conspiracy!

We have discussed what it means to worship fully, spend less, and give more, and today we are going to talk about the fourth pillar of the Advent Conspiracy and that is to love all.

In the last three weeks, we have shown you a number of videos; some were shown to make a point about how we will celebrate Christmas this year. Our hope is that together we will worship Jesus Christ fully and truly celebrate His coming to the world.

When we spoke about spending less we introduced you to “Trade as One” a ministry that encourages fair trade purchases from impoverished families in developing nations.

We encouraged you that if we are going to spend, we can try to “spend beautifully” by purchasing gifts in ways that help alleviate the poverty of others.

We have also encouraged you not only to spend less, but give whatever you save to help others in need.

We also showed you a video clip about the “Clear Blue Water Project” and challenged ourselves to help build a well in Malawi, Africa, where Katie Bartlett and her children whom we support as a church are returning to serve. [Share her story and situation – talk about our missions budget]

She will be here next week and you do not want to miss that!

My heart has been deeply touched by your generosity towards this project – to date we have already raised over \$1500.

In fact, your generous response clearly reflects that you do have a love for all in your heart.

But let’s take a few moments and look at what it means to love all.

II. Love All

I think one of the greatest deceptions in our society today is how we define love. The idea that love is fundamentally a feeling prevails in most people’s minds, but is that really love?

Listen to the definition of love from The Free Dictionary (www.thefreedictionary.com):

1. A deep, tender, ineffable feeling of affection and solicitude toward a person, such as that arising from kinship, recognition of attractive qualities, or a sense of underlying oneness.

2. A feeling of intense desire and attraction toward a person with whom one is disposed to make a pair; the emotion of romance.
3. **a.** Sexual passion. **b.** A love affair.
4. An intense emotional attachment, as for a pet or treasured object.
5. A person who is the object of deep or intense affection or attraction; beloved. Often used as a term of endearment.
6. An expression of one's affection: Send him my love.
7. **a.** A strong predilection or enthusiasm: "a love of language." **b.** The object of such an enthusiasm: "The outdoors is her greatest love."

What is the common factor in all these definitions? Emotion.

Biblical love, while not excluding emotion, affection or passion, is grounded in one's will. We love all because God loves all and He gives us the power we need to choose the highest good of others, in spite of our feelings towards them.

I like how Martin Luther King, Jr. defined love. Listen to and watch this clip (Note like...love).

The Bible speaks of love as expressing itself in actions:

"Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. 19 Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God." (1 John 3:18-19, NLT)

Ken Davis, an author, tells the following story from his own life about the true meaning of love:

For the first 15 years of my marriage, I was a terrible husband. Diane held down a full-time job, became my secretary, mothered our daughters, and waited on me hand and foot without ever demanding that I lift a finger to help. I loved my wife very much, but I hadn't yet learned how to show my love. I had a lesson to learn, and God used a vacuum cleaner to teach it.

I learned many things about vacuuming one day. First, I learned that our cat was terrified of vacuum cleaners. That kept me entertained for about an hour.

As I vacuumed in one direction, a stripe would appear. Going the opposite direction would create a stripe of a different shade. Entranced, I striped the whole room. Then I went crossways, creating a checkerboard pattern. I got so carried away that I dusted the furniture and straightened the entire house.

I was once again embedded in the easy chair, working on my crossword puzzle, when Diane came home. She struggled through the door with a bag of groceries under each arm, kicked the door shut with one foot, and then took in the house with an expert glance. Her mouth dropped open. Slowly the bags slipped from her grasp and dropped to the floor. "Who did this?" she asked.

"I did," I said. Without warning, she attacked. Diving on me before I could get out of the chair, she smothered me with kisses and hugs, showering gratitude on me for helping her.

The vacuum cleaner taught me an important lesson that day. Love is expressed with more than just words.

Ken Davis, Lighten Up! Great Stories from One of America's Favorite Storytellers (Zondervan, 2000), pp. 123-124

Jesus who commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves made it very clear what it means to truly love another person:

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. 36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’ 37 Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? 39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’” (Matthew 25:34-40, NLT)

James in his biblical letter after talking about the law of love says, *“What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? 15 Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, 16 and you say, ‘Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well’—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?” (James 2:14-16, NLT)*

And again the Apostle Paul says, *“What is important is faith expressing itself in love.” (Galatians 5:6, NLT)*

You see, it is impossible to consider yourself a Christian without dealing with this whole issue of love. We can say we have faith or that we believe in God, but that faith must learn to express itself through love.

You may struggle with this, but as a people who call themselves followers of Christ we must learn to press through our feelings of dislike or even hatred and act in love towards all, and especially to those who are poor and downtrodden.

“There should be no poor among you, for the Lord your God will greatly bless you in the land he is giving you as a special possession...But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. 8 Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need...Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do. 11 There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor.” (Deuteronomy 15:4,7,8,10 and 11, NLT)

III. Application

Now I understand that many of us are considered to be poor by American standards, but I have been blessed by the generosity that you have shown in helping others – whether through the food pantry, our Goodwill Fund, or to help build a well in Malawi.

The money for these things does not just fall from the sky or come from some superfund that we dip into; this has come from your generosity, which I know gives glory to God.

In this you have demonstrated your love to others all around the world.

I also am aware that it can be easier to love someone who lives halfway around the world than someone who you interact with on a regular basis.

Remember two things about this.

First, we are commanded to love all, not **like** all – and there is a difference.

Second, the only way to love all is to have a deep awareness of **God's** love for you.

“We love each other because he loved us first.” (1 John 4:19, NLT)

And Jesus said, *“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.”* (John 13:34-35, NLT)

Today, let us renew our commitment to love all – our family, our friends, our enemies, and those around the world – through our words and actions.