

ADVENT AND CHARITY

I. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

A. During the four Sundays of Advent we've looked at Hospitality, Generosity, Spontaneity, and Charity. Christmas Eve we'll look at Divine Humility. As we focus on *Charity* today, we need to see that word in the KJV sense. If you thought I was going to preach and guilt you into giving a big end-of-the-year donation to Samaritan's Purse or Salvation Army, you can relax--keep your wallets in your pockets and your purses on the floor. When the old KJV uses the word Charity, it's talking about Love (Agape). Selfless, unconditional, action-oriented Love.

B. Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines *Charity* first and foremost as: "In a general sense, love, benevolence, good will; that disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good. In a theological sense, it includes supreme love to God, and universal good will to men. (1 Cor. 13; Col. 3; 1 Tim. 1)" **Secondary definitions include such things as parental/familial love, giving liberally to the poor, gift-giving, support of what we today call charitable organizations.**

C. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (KJV) is as much for Christmas as it is a wedding. *1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. 4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

D. So where do those verses mention Mary & Joseph, angels & shepherds, a bright star over top a Bethlehem stable, or Magi presenting gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to a Baby? They don't. So what's the connection of 1 Cor. 13 with the story of Christmas? The Christmas connection is Charity--God's supreme, deep and steadfast, Love! As much as we might say Christmas is about us showing love to others (and so it is!), it's far more about God showing His love to us by giving us His Son to die for us.

E. John 3:16-18 (ESV) is the testimony of Christmas. This is about the Inexpressible Gift of Jesus Christ: *16 For God so loved the world, (God so loved you!) that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. 18 Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because He has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (Fight your way through the glitter and the glitz, the fog and lights, the eggnog and elves, and all the chaos and pageantry, to this spot right here: You were eternally doomed yet God loved you so much that He sent the only One who could rescue you--His very own Son! Merry Christmas!)*

F. So you're saying I was doomed and the ultimate story of Christmas is that the Baby in the feeding trough was God the Son. And you're saying the core reason He came was because of the supreme charity of God--that He Loved me that much? Yes!

G. Ephesians 2:1-9 (ESV) talks more about this supreme charity, the immensity of God's Love: *1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (We were dead men walking, members of of the axis of evil--the world, the flesh, and the devil.) 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (Joy to the World! Hark the Herald Angel Sing! Gloria in excelsis Deo!)—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace (Undeserved Charity!) in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (He's the One in the manger! He's also the One on the cross! He's the One on the Throne! Oh may He be the One in your heart!) 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

H. Our old friends, Curt & Linda Taylor, used to sing a folk song and the chorus went like this: "*If I have not charity, if love doesn't flow from me, I am nothing, Jesus reduce me to love.*" So how does this vertical love from God, flip horizontal? (Remember that waterfall illustration a couple weeks ago?)

I. 1 John 4:7-12 (ESV) has more to say about God's love and our own: 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. (It's never dry at the bottom of the falls if the water's flowing. And with God it's always flowing!) 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, (Manifested first in that manger. His Name is Emmanuel!) that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. (Here comes the vertical part once again.) 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (The atoning sacrifice) for our sins. (2 Cor 5:21) (Next we have the horizontal dynamic of love.) 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (Fire hose illustration. If a fireman opens his hose on you and drenches you, you ought to be wet.) 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. (What does this Charity, this Love from above look like? It looks hospitable. It looks generous. It flows spontaneously. It's saturated in humility. It's lying in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. It's bleeding for your sins on a cross. It's interceding for you on a heavenly throne. It's coming back to take you there some day. This Love looks like Jesus!)

J. If I could give you anything for Christmas, I would give you this: God loves you! He proved it through His Son, this very One born in Bethlehem, who grew up in Egypt and Nazareth, who died for us in Jerusalem, who now reigns in heaven. No gold, frankincense, or myrrh can touch this. Nothing on Main Street, or Wall Street, no last minute sale at Walmart can touch this. God loves You! Merry Christmas!

* Close with Prayer...

* **John 13:34-35 (NIV) is our Benediction Verse. It will take us straight into Christmas, into every home and celebration. These words are from that little Boy born in a stable who grew up. He spoke these the night before He died: 34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (KJV)

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. **2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. **3** And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. **4** Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, **5** Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; **6** Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; **7** Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. **8** Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. **9** For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. **10** But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. **11** When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12** For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. **13** And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

John 3:16-18 (ESV)

16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. **18** Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because He has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (NIVV)

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. **8** Love never fails.

Ephesians 2:1-9 (ESV)

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **6** and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by

grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

1 John 4:7-12 (ESV)

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.

Film Clips & Other Links

"Emmanuel" - Laura Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ci246qDAMGc>

"Promise of the Ages" - Stuart Townend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VoQonbeXVo>

"O Children Come" - Keith & Kristyn Getty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VoQonbeXVo>

"Do You Hear What I Hear" - Jean Watson and Phil Keaggy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9nKkWS6H3o>

"Charity" - Kenn Gulliksen (An oldie but a goodie!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m535OdDhFcY>

Christmas Songs - Tim Hawkins (Hilarious)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7vvWafBPzM>

Bonus Stuff

A Simple Christmas Prayer

By Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

"Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be Thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

Charity

By Kenn Gulliksen © 1974

Although I speak with tongues,
Of men and of angels,
And though I prophesy
And understand all.
Although I have all faith
So mountains may be removed,
And though I feed the poor,
And give of my life:

Chorus:

If I have not charity,
If love does not flow from me,
I am nothing,
Jesus reduce me to love.

Love is patient and kind,
Love is not envious,
Not proud but gentle and meek,
Seeks not its own way.
Love sings when Jesus prevails,
Believes and endures all things,
Love hopes and bears every wrong,
And love never fails.

Chorus:

If I have not charity,
If love does not flow from me,
I am nothing,
Jesus reduce me to love.

One season I was a child,
I spoke and I thought as a child,
But when I turned to a man,
Such ways put aside.
Though now we see through a glass,
Yet then we shall see face to face,
Though now abide faith and hope,
The greatest is love.

Chorus:

If I have not charity,
If love does not flow from me,
I am nothing,
Jesus reduce me to love.

Sweet Charity's Bread

Author Unknown

"Go break to the needy sweet charity's bread;
For giving is living," the angel said.
"And must I be giving again and again?"
My peevish and pitiless answer ran.
"Oh no," said the angel, piercing me through.
"Just give till the Master stops giving to you."