*Introduction*

This morning is the first Sunday of advent, the beginning of the Christmas season for the Church.

It's a time when we start to focus on the birth of the Saviour, the One and only Son of God, fully human yet fully divine.

Its a time when we see Jesus as a baby, a lovely, cuddly picture of the child in the manger with his parents, the shepherds and the kings around him (even though we know they came later). Its a very warm picture of the love of God, but is it a true picture of His love.

There is a movement within the Church today that says in effect 'don't worry, God loves you'

There is another group that will say to you something like 'God is a God of love - He will not send anyone to hell!'

Another group will say 'love one another' because that is a command of Jesus.

There is a need for us to 'love' because after all, Jesus said we should and Paul in Corinthians spends a whole chapter on love. So that must be right.

This morning, DV, we are going to spend a short while looking at the love that God wants us to have, for Him and for one another.

There are different kinds of love, four in fact, and the question is - which type of love does God show towards us?

Throughout the Scriptures we will see these different loves being shown.

In Genesis we see a love between God and Adam

In the Book of Songs of Solomon we see a rather different love between a man and woman being shown.

In the Gospels we see Jesus showing different types of love.

So what are these four Kinds of Love (as defined in the Greek language)

—***Storge***
natural affinity for another... affection

—***Eros***
emotional passion for another... romance

—***Phileo***
liking and enjoying another... friendship

— ***Agape***
seeking the highest good of another... selflessness

Realistically, every marriage will have temporary dry spells in which romance and affection will wane. And, gratefully, ***agape*** is the love that will carry you through those times to new depths within your relationship.

*"Love never fails." (*[*1 Corinthians 13:8*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+13%3A8)*)*

**What are biblical characteristics of** **agape love?**

—Forfeit personal rights.
   *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." (*[*1 John 3:16*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+3%3A16)*)*

—Focus on giving, not getting.
   *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (*[*John 3:16*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+3%3A16)*)*

—Forgive personal offenses.
   *"[Love] keeps no record of wrongs." (*[*1 Corinthians 13:5*](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+13%3A5)*)*

Agape love is the love that God has for each one of us, and that we should have for one another.

In the garden of Eden Eve was borne out of agape love - God saw that Adam needed a mate and so sought the highest good of Adam , even though God knew what was going to happen a little while later.

***1 John 4:10-12 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.***

**How** ***agape* is different**

*Storge*, *philia* and *eros* are all natural to humans.

But *agape* is not.

*Agape*-love is not experienced until a person has the Holy Spirit living in him/her.

This Godlike love is in complete contrast to all pagan ideas of love. These other types of love are often self-centered, and work for one's self-interest, self-gratification and self-protection.

*Agape* is completely unselfish. *Agape* comes from a heart of love and seeks to bless the other person's highest good: [1 Corinthians 13:4-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+13%3A4-7).

Only agape—***a selfless commitment to do good to someone regardless of whether he deserves it***—comes completely from God and is part of His essential nature.

**God is the source of *agape***. The pattern of *agape* is Jesus: [1 John 4:7-19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A7-19).

**Human** ***agape***

Human *agape*, our love towards other people, will always come from the Holy Spirit.

This is made crystal clear in the New Testament:

[***Galatians 5:22***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+5%3A22)***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness;***

[***Colossians 1:8***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Col+1%3A8)***.******7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant,[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3A7-8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29473a)***] who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.***

Christian *agape* is unnatural, and supernatural, in the sense that it is impossible for anyone who is not full of God's Spirit.

***"...by the love of the Spirit, ...join me in my struggle"*** [***Romans 15:30***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+15%3A30)***.***

**The love of Jesus**

When we want to look at God's love we look at Jesus and find that God's love is perfectly exemplified in him. The love of Jesus:

is to the Father:

[***Psalm 91:14***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+91%3A14) ***“Because he[***[***b***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=psalm+91&version=NIV#fen-NIV-15410b)***] loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.***

[***John 14:31***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A31) ***31 but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.;***

is to his church: [John 15:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A9); [Ephesians 5:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+5%3A24);

is to those who love him: [Proverbs 8:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Pr+8%3A17); [John 14:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A21).

Jesus' love is seen in his:

coming to seek the lost: [***Luke 19:10***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+19%3A10)***; For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”***

praying for his enemies: [Luke 23:34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+23%3A34);

giving himself for us: [Galatians 2:20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+2%3A20);

dying for us: [John 15:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A13); [1 John 3:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+3%3A16);

washing away our sins: [Revelation 1:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+1%3A5);

praying for us: [Hebrews 7:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+7%3A25); [9:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+9%3A24);

sending the Spirit: [Psalm 68:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+68%3A18); [John 16:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+16%3A7);

rebukes and discipline: [***Revelation 3:19***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+3%3A19)***; Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.***

surpasses knowledge: [Ephesians 3:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+3%3A19);

is meant to be imitated: [***1 John 3:16***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+3%3A16) ***This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters..***

**Jesus' love to his followers is:**

compelling: [2 Corinthians 5:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+5%3A14);

never changes: [John 13:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A1);

such that we cannot be separated from it, indissoluble: [Romans 8:35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+8%3A35).

Obedient followers of Jesus abide in his love: [John 15:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A10). Jesus' followers obtain victory through his love: [Romans 8:37](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+8%3A37).

Jesus' love is the basis of his followers love for him: [Luke 7:47](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+7%3A47).

**Jesus showed his love to:**

Peter: [Luke 22:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+22%3A32), [61](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+22%3A61);

Lazarus: [John 11:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+11%3A5), [36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+11%3A36);

His apostles: [John 13:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A1), [34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A34);

John: [John 13:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A23).

**The love of God**

The Bible tells us a great deal about God's love for us.

The love of God is part of God's character: [2 Corinthians 13:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+13%3A11); [1 John 4:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A8). Jesus was especially loved by God the Father: [John 15:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A9); [17:26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+17%3A26). Jesus abides in God's love: [John 15:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A10). God's love is described as:

sovereign: [Deuteronomy 7:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+7%3A8); [10:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+10%3A15);

great: [Ephesians 2:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+2%3A4);

abiding: [Zephaniah 3:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Zep+3%3A17);

unfailing: [Isaiah 49:15, 16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+49%3A15-16);

compelling: [Hosea 11:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Hos+11%3A4);

everlasting: [Jeremiah 31:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jer+31%3A3).

God's love is shown to:

perishing sinners: [John 3:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+3%3A16);

his saints: [John 16:27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+16%3A27); [17:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+17%3A23); [2 Thessalonians 2:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Th+2%3A16); [1 John 4:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A16);

the destitute: [Deuteronomy 10:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+10%3A18);

the cheerful giver: [2 Corinthians 9:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+9%3A7).

**God's love is seen in:**

the giving of Jesus: [John 3:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+3%3A16);

the sending of Jesus: [1 John 4:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A9);

Jesus dying for us while we were sinners: [Romans 5:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+5%3A8); [1 John 4:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A10);

election: [Malachi 1:2, 3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mal+1%3A2-3); [Romans 9:11-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+9%3A11-13);

adoption: [1 John 3:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+3%3A1);

redemption: [Isaiah 43:3, 4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+43%3A3-4); [63:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+63%3A9);

salvation being free: [Titus 3:4-7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Tit+3%3A4-7);

sin being forgiven: [Isaiah 38:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+38%3A17);

being made alive spiritually: [Ephesians 2:4,5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+2%3A4-5);

drawing us to himself: [Hosea 11:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Hos+11%3A4);

earthly blessings: [Deuteronomy 7:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+7%3A13);

discipline: [Hebrews 12:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+12%3A6);

defeating evil counsels: [Deuteronomy 23:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+23%3A5).

God's love is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit: [Romans 5:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+5%3A5). Saints know and believe in God's love: [1 John 4:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A16). Saints should abide in God's love: [Jude 1:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jude+1%3A21).

**God's love is made complete in Christians:**

by obedience: [1 John 2:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+2%3A5);

by brotherly love: [1 John 4:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A12).

God's love is the source of our love for him [1 John 4:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A19).

**Our love for Jesus and God**

Must be *exclusive* love: [Matthew 6:24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+6%3A24)

Is based on *gratitude:* [Luke 7:42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+7%3A42), [47](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+7%3A47)

Is *obedient* love: [John 14:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A15),[21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A21),[23, 24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+14%3A23-24); [15:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A10); [1 John 2:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+2%3A5); [5:2,3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+5%3A2-3); [2 John 6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Jn+1%3A6)

Is meant to be an *outgoing* love: [1 John 4:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A12), [20](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A20); [3:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+3%3A14)

Is commanded Deuteronomy: [11:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+11%3A1); [Joshua 22:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jos+22%3A5)

Is the first great commandment: [Matthew 22:38](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+22%3A38)

Is to be with all the heart: [Deuteronomy 6:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Dt+6%3A5); [Matthew 22:37](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+22%3A37)

Is better than all sacrifices: [Mark 12:33](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mk+12%3A33)

**Is produced by:**

the Holy Spirit: [Galatians 5:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+5%3A22); [2 Thessalonians 3:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Th+3%3A5)

the love of god towards us: [1 John 4:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A19)

answers to prayer: [Psalm 116:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+116%3A1)

**Should produce**

joy: [Psalm 5:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+5%3A11)

love to fellow-Christians: [1 John 5:1](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+5%3A1)

hatred of sin***:*** [***Psalm 97:10***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+97%3A10) ***10 Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones  and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.***

obedience to God:[***1 John 5:3***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+5%3A3) ***3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome***

**Should make us:**

persevere in love: [Jude 1:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jude+1%3A21)

exhort one another to love: [Psalm 31:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+31%3A23)

pray for love: [2 Thessalonians 3:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Th+3%3A5).

**Our love for other people**

Christian love should be shown in our obedience to and love of God and in our love towards people. Our love for other people:

is from God: [1 John 4:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A7);

is commanded by God: [1 John 4:21](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+4%3A21);

is commanded by Jesus: [John 13:34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A34); [15:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A12); [1 John 3:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Jn+3%3A23);

follows the example of Jesus: [John 13:34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A34); [15:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+15%3A12); [Ephesians 5:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+5%3A2);

is the second great commandment: [Matthew 22:37-39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+22%3A37-39).

**Characteristics of Christian love to others include:**

Ministering to the needs of others: [Matthew 25:35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+25%3A35); [Hebrews 6:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+6%3A10);

Loving each other: [Galatians 5:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+5%3A13);

Helping strangers: [Leviticus 25:35](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lev+25%3A35); [Matthew 25:36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+25%3A36);

Clothing the naked: [Isaiah 58:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Isa+58%3A7); [Matthew 25:36](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+25%3A36);

Visiting the sick: [Job 31:16-22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Job+31%3A16-22); [James 1:27](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jas+1%3A27)

Being sympathetic: [Romans 12:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+12%3A15); [1 Corinthians 12:26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+12%3A26);

Supporting the weak: [Galatians 6:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Gal+6%3A2); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+5%3A14);

Covering the faults of others: [Proverbs 10:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Pr+10%3A12); [1 Peter 4:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Pe+4%3A8);

Forgiving other people: [Ephesians 4:32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+4%3A32); [Colossians 3:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Col+3%3A13);

Bearing with other people in love: [Ephesians 4:2](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Eph+4%3A2);

Rebuking: [***Matthew 18:15***](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+18%3A15)***“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over..***

If you see your brother or sister sinning and do nothing about it, you are not loving them as Christ told you to do.

**Christian love towards other people was exemplified by:**

Joseph: [Genesis 45:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ge+45%3A15);

Ruth: [Ruth 1:16,17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ru+1%3A16-17);

Jonathan: [1 Samuel 20:17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Sa+20%3A17),[41,42](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Sa+20%3A41-42);

Obadiah. [1 Kings 18:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Ki+18%3A4);

The centurion: [Luke 7:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Lk+7%3A5);

The Church: [Acts 2:46](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+2%3A46); [Hebrews 10:33,34](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+10%3A33-34);

Lydia: "Come and stay at my house," [Acts 16:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+16%3A15);

Aquila: [Romans 16:3,4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+16%3A3-4);

Paul: [2 Corinthians 6:11,12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+6%3A11-12);

Epaphroditus: [Philippians 2:25,26](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Php+2%3A25-26),[30](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Php+2%3A30);

The Philippians: [Philippians 4:15-19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Php+4%3A15-19);

The Colossians: [Colossians 1:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Col+1%3A4);

The Thessalonians: [1 Thessalonians 3:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+3%3A6);

Philemon: [Philemon 1:7-9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Phm+1%3A7-9);

Moses: [Hebrews 11:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+11%3A25).

*Conclusion*

As the pastor of this Church I have an awesome responsibility for keeping you on the right path, for speaking the truth in love and rebuking where necessary. The love of Christ makes me endure in seeking your highest good. That highest good is to keep you on the narrow road that leads to life. I have been criticised for not delivering sermons in love, but I assure you they are. If you look at how Christ spoke to the people, he didn't fluff it up, he didn't dumb down the message so that he did not cause offence, he told it exactly how it was. But no one would say he did not love.

My role is to tell it how it is, but it comes with love. Regardless of how that may make you feel.

As you go into this coming week, take that agape love that God has given you through the power of His Holy Spirit and seek the highest good of those around you.

It costs to love.

Christ love meant sacrifice.

We have an awesome responsibility to tell those around us where they stand with God and their need of Him, regardless of what they may think of us.

To do less, so that they still like you is not in their interests.

Let me encourage you this week to be bold and courageous for Him. When you have an opportunity to show agape love, take it - for the highest good of that person.

Christmas is full of opportunities to talk of Jesus and his amazing sacrifice. Let us grasp those opportunities for His glory

Amen