

Advent Week 4: Hell/Love

READING: 1 John 4:7-12 (Read Scripture Aloud)

1 John 4:7-12

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.

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, we're the Wymer's. This morning we will be lighting the love candle, and discussing the last of all the four last things: Hell. It's last in order of the devotionals, only, for Scripture tells us that even Hell itself will be destroyed, and Heaven and life with God will be the final and everlasting thing. It isn't very fun to talk about Hell, or to think about it. It isn't very popular to believe in it at all any more, even in some Christian circles. I would love to believe that there were no Hell at all myself, but unfortunately most of what we know about it has come from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Himself, so if we are to believe His words about the Kingdom of God, about the forgiveness of sins and the hope of glory, we must also believe what He says about Hell. (Add verses where Jesus mentions and give one example)

Many unbelievers use the doctrine of hell as a justification for their unbelief- that they can't believe a loving God would send good people to eternal torment if they don't believe the right things. While this sounds very big-hearted to risk your eternal destiny upon the sufferings of others, it is based on incomplete logic. God is so unwilling for people to be separated from Him in Hell that He gave Himself, His son, so that no one should have to go there. He has in fact, done everything in His power to keep us from being there, while still giving us the freedom to choose. Hell must exist so that free will can exist, even as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil had to be planted in the Garden of Eden, so that Adam and Eve had the freedom to choose. What kind of paradise would Heaven be to the hater of God, forever in the divine Presence, with the praise of the saints and elders and angels constantly ringing in their ears? Heaven itself would be as hell to them.

DEVOTIONAL:

Christian philosopher and author Dallas Willard writes:

"No one chooses in the abstract to go to hell or even to be the kind of person who belongs there. But their orientation toward self leads them to become the kind of person for whom away-from-God is the only place for which they are suited. It is a place they would, in the end, choose for themselves, rather than come to humble themselves before God and accept who He is. Whether or not God's will is infinitely flexible, the human will is not. There are limits beyond which it cannot bend back, cannot turn or repent... We should be very sure that the ruined soul is not one who has missed a few more or less important theological points and will flunk a theology examination at the end of life. Hell is not an "Oops!" or a slip. One does not miss heaven by a hair, but by constant effort to avoid and escape God." As C.S. Lewis has said, "The door of hell is locked from the inside."

This is why we end our talk on the four last things with Hell. This is why the Word who was in the beginning with God, by whom all things were made, the commander of the armies of Heaven, became a baby. To paraphrase St. Augustine, this is why the Bread of Life felt hunger, why the fountainhead of joy felt thirst, why the Light of the World descended into darkness, why the judge of the living and the dead allowed Himself to be condemned by an unjust judge, why Life Himself, died. And now we rejoice with all God's people that, as Colossians 1:13 says, "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Luke 1:77-79

If you are an apprentice to Jesus, you do not need to fear hell, but you also don't need to ignore it. One of our spiritual fathers, John Eldredge says that we are part of a beautiful love story that is set in a world at war.

LIGHTING OF THE HOPE, PEACE, JOY, AND LOVE CANDLE: Light the One Pink Candle and all Three of The Purple Candles.

PRAYER