



**"No Cross,
No Crown"**

The Cross and Crown

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God's love is the central message of the Gospel. John 3:16, perhaps the most recognized verse in all of Scripture, makes that point clear: The very reason for Advent is God's great love for the world.

Last Sunday, for the second Sunday of Advent, we explored the love of God from the masterwork on the subject, I John 4. That chapter makes it plain that our love is an outflow of God's love in us, and that, if God is in us, we will have love for one another.

How do we show the world God's brand of love? Let me suggest three ways.

First, we need to be present. As God left his kingly throne in Heaven, so we must leave our comfort zone and go where the people are. God's love is expressed not only in our churches or in our families; it must be made visible wherever we are.

Second, as God laid down his life, so we must lay ours down. I recognize that most of us will not be called to lay down our lives in martyrdom, but consider the fact that Jesus laid down his life many times before he submitted to the cross. When he was tired, or he had places to go – wherever he found himself with crowds surrounding him, he laid down his life, setting aside his needs and plans so that he could serve the people he loved. Paul said of himself, "I die daily," and so must we also die – to our ego, passions and goals – out of love for the lost.



And that's the third point. To demonstrate God's love, we must love people even in their lostness. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Like Jesus, we are not sent to condemn the world but to see them saved. (John 3:17) In our human nature, it's so much easier to stand in judgment over the sinful than to show them love, but our call is to the more difficult path of loving them.

This kind of love is impossible on our own. John reminds us that it comes from God, and that, if we know him and are born of him, this love is in us. (See I John 4:7) When Jesus came into the world, love came into the world!

We love because he first loved us!

(I John 4:19)

Thanks for Praying!

We want to finish strong! When you pray, please remember:

- our upcoming week and month of prayer,
- many families struggling with housing and heat, and
- discipling new believers







Sharing the Good News at our Night in Bethlehem outreach

We're praying with you!

If you're on our mailing list*, you're on our prayer list! If there's anything specific that we can join with you in praying about, please let us know.

Thanks so much to those who keep in touch! It's so encouraging to hear from you!

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* **Important:** If you'd rather not be on our mailing list, we won't be offended! Just call or drop us a note, and we'll remove you. (We'll still keep you on our prayer list!)

If you'd rather receive this letter via e-mail, please let us know!

Did you know?



I John 4:19 has been posted in every church that Highway has occupied in its history, but the latest posting is missing one word that was in all the others. Instead of saying, "We love *him* because he first loves us," it reads, "We love because he first loved us." This was not an editorial choice by our leadership team but, rather, the result of switching from the King James Version to the New International Version. We did due diligence before we made the change, examining several translations before we approved it. My personal favorite translation is from the Disciples' Literal New Testament:

We are loving because He first loved us. (I John 4:19, DLNT)



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