

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
December 18, 2016

In This is Love

1 John 4:7-10

4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

4:8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

4:9 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.

4:10 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.

### **1. Love of Sacrifice**

We have four candles for the Advent season. Following is the nicknames and meanings of the candles; “the candle of prophecy,” meaning, “hope,” “the candle of angels,” meaning, “peace,” “the candle of shepherd,” meaning, “joy,” and finally, “the candle of Bethlehem,” meaning, “love.” This candle is for “love,” but it’s not as general love between people, it is the “special love.”

In Japan, Christmas used to be the day of eating cakes, but it becomes the day of young couples nowadays. The love of advent candles, however, is contrary to the love in between couples. In the United States, Christmas is for family. 5 years ago, in 2011, Christmas was on Sunday likewise this year. At the time, some of churches was absent of worship, saying, “25th is Christmas, so no worship on that

day; please enjoy family time!” When I heard of this, I could really say nothing; it takes the biscuit. I suppose that they might have had the substitute worship on Christmas Eve, but no churches should be soaked in the philosophy of “Christmas is the family day!” I believe family love is important, but the love should be remembered on Christmas day is more than “family love.” It is the love of God.

This love of God could be described in one word, “sacrificial love.” In present generation, “sacrifice” might be in denial. For example, in psychological field, “self-sacrifice” is defined as bad thing. “Self-sacrifice” in psychology seems to express the situation of peoples’ mind, like trying to gain someone’s favor, or bottling up affections or emotions in order to avoid troubles. I have been involved in Al-Anon Family Group, which support the family of alcoholic patients; and I have seen the sacrifice of their family. It is the typical examples of “self-sacrifice” in psychology. The wife of the patient is very offering, and the children have innocent love for their father. When the husband becomes violent, they just endure with silence and even try to protect the blamed father. If the patient lost his job because of alcoholic, his wife works longer and supports the domestic account, and his children don’t ask something to purchase. However, the father doesn’t even try to improve himself looking at his family’s suffering. His dependence gets more serious and worse than current situation because of his family’s “self-sacrifice.” It must not the family of happiness if someone is forced to endure and try to bottle up everything. Moreover, it is never, ever the healthy sacrifice.

However, all of sacrifices are not unhealthy; the true love always needs sacrifice. We are all brought up and supported by love,

sacrificing something of fathers and mothers, family, and other people. That's because we could be here. No one could live without others' sacrifice. Well, how many people sacrifice their precious things for current America's prosperities? God's love on Christmas is the sacrificial love that is from true of true love. This week, we may remember His love by seeing the candle of love.

## **2. Love to the Son**

To begin thinking about God's love, let's start with the fact that God loved the Son. Let's reassure ourselves that the Son had been with Father God from the eternal time.

God created everything in this world. God created the universe, cells of all livings, genes in the cells, all the materials, elements, atoms and elementary particles. God created not only visible materials, but also Heaven and angels serving for God. Nothing existed by itself. Only God existed. Everything else was created by God, when their existence had began.

Then, was the Son of God created as well? No, the Son was not a creature. He existed form the beginning. Gospel of John expresses in 1:1-3 as follows; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." The word "Word" refers to the Son of God. The Son was not the one among creatures. Inversely, the Son created everything. As John 1:3 says, "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Ancient Christians described the Son being God and not created as follows, "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of

God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.” (Nicene Creed)  
The Son was born from Father from eternity and has been existed.  
Strictly speaking, Christmas is not the day that the Son of God is born, but the day when God becomes humans.

We call God “Father”. It is often explained that God created everything as the Creator, and guide and protect all the living things with his big love. This is indeed true. But was God not “Father” before he created the world? Yes, he was Father from the beginning because He had his Son from the eternity. God is called “Father” because he was a father of his Son.

The Bible says God is love (1 John 4:8) and God’s love is eternal as God is eternal. It means long before He created and loved human, He had an object of His love. The object of his eternal love is the Son. God loved his Son unlimitedly. The Father’s love toward the Son is expressed twice in the Bible, Matthew 3:17 and 17:5. God said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” in both verses. The Son also expressed his Father’s love as follows; “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand” (John 3:35), “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing” (John 5:20), and “as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” (John 15:9)

Along with His Father-like love, God also has a delicate love like a mother. Isaiah 49:15 says, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.” This describes His love

toward his people. If God loved His people like this, then it is easily imaginable that He loved his Son with such a big love.

### **3. Love to Men**

However, God sent his beloved Son to this world. as John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son.” God knew that people did not welcome his Son, even hate and cut off his Son. God decided that his Son takes over the sins of people and forgive them. A sinless man takes over the sins, and it is very unfair. This is not justice, and this is what God hates. However, God did this on purpose, and also the Son Jesus willingly offer himself as a sacrifice on the cross.

Long time ago, when I was cleaning the lid of the intake pipe of a heater with a cloth, I thought this. The lid became clean; however, the cloth was getting dirtier and dirtier. In order to forgive our sins, the Son Jesus also received our sins and dirtiness and was thrown away like the dirty cloth. I was impressed with this thought. God showed his love to us, which God sent it to his Son. My heart was filled with joy, because I have been saved by the sacrifice of the Son.

Someone provided a little story of God’s love of sacrifice. The writer created this story that two angels are talking before Christmas.

“I heard that the Son will go to human world. Is this true?” “Yes, I think that’s true. He does not have the brilliant crown, sacred clothes and will be born as naked baby from the virgin’s womb. Archangel Gabriel has already told the fact to a virgin named Mary.”

“Really. Something big will happen.” “Actually, I heard that God has away before planned this in order to save us.”

“Human? They are doing terrible things that are against God, and they are sinful. Why does God do this for human?” “God deeply loves human and can not abandon them.”

“That’s right. God loves human and does whatever for them.” “The Son will be called “Jesus Christ” in human world. He will be born to the poor carpenter Joseph’s house so he must be spend though life.”

“Oh, he must have much pains.” “I think that’s true but actually something bigger and terrible thing is waiting for him. When he becomes around 30 years old, he is to preach the Gospel of God to humans. After that, he will be executed on the cross for sins.”

“What!?! Son of God will die for the sins?” “Yes, for sins of human. That’s the plan of God. That’s the only way to save human. He will be born to Virgin Mary. He does not have sin in his blood and receive the sins with his body. This is the only way for the holy God to forgive human.”

“That means the Son is born to the earth to die? To receive the sins of human?” “Yes. time is up, and a big star is ready for travel. It was very hurry to send a signal to the people who are waiting for the Son’s birth.”

“Ok. we should listen to the direction of Archangel and help the Son who walks on the earth.” “We should protect him sincerely until he will fulfill the plan of salvation and come back to heaven.”

As this conversation of angels tells, for the Son Jesus, the Christmas was the first step for the cross of the salvation. Someone said, “Often, love is described by the shape of heart. However, God’s love should be describe by the shape of the cross.” I think that’s true. Today’s Scripture points out the cross, and says “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.” When we receive the love of the cross in our heart sincerely, we understand that God loves each of us by the love He loved his Son. In this fourth week of Advent, let us remember the love of God, shown in the baby born in Bethlehem, with calm heart.

**(Prayer)**

Dear Father, you love us. Your love is with not only words but also sacrifice. It can be said “the amount of love can be scaled by the size of sacrifice” You love us with the huge sacrifice, which is your Son. There are many things called “love” in this world. However, your love is the only one to fill our hearts and make us live. Make us the people who receive the love, filled by the love, and live for the love in this Christmas season. We pray to you in the name of Lord Jesus, Amen.