

December 23, 2018

I John 4:7-12

Advent lights grow, built on each other: Hope to Peace to Joy. Each one illuminating the other, leading to new understandings of the next.

In these Advent lights, these lights of preparation, especially this light of Love, we are challenged to distinguish between God's love and human love, which almost always contains elements of power and control. Agape love (as opposed to *philio*, *eros*, *storge*) is giving, selfless, unconditional love.

When we are able to reach beyond ourselves, recognize the possible the power and control desire in our love, then we move closer to that for which we wait – our transformation of understanding of what Christmas, what Christ, what the Word made flesh is all about: The birth of God's all-powerful love in us.

Discovering this leads us to understand John's revelation. John wrote: "because God is love – you can't know God if you don't love."

Take all the doctrines of the church –

- believe this, believe that – or don't
- do this, do that – or don't

And throw them out.

Yes, all those things that divide Christendom – communion, baptism, beliefs – right or wrong? Forget it!

The Beatles were right – All you need is love

- not the "free love" of the '60's
- not "sex, drugs, and rock'n roll"

God's love

- sacrificial love
- wanting nothing in return love
- unconditional love

This is the love that the Advent lights – hope, peace, joy and love – are preparing us to receive. But, to receive this love, to be transformed by this love, requires us to tap into the power of God's love. The power of God's love can only be "tapped into" by giving it away, letting go of control over it.

It is when we allow love to flow through us and out into the world, when we let it go that it comes back to us in creative and healing ways.

The miracle of God's love is that the more you give it away, the more you have. Giving concern, care, food, shelter – for and to the other, seeking nothing, requiring nothing, simply giving because that is how we are loved too; giving love away in this way is how God's love is perfected in us. And, perfect love in us is how God, who "dwells deeply within us", is revealed to the world.

May God bless our Advent preparation with love by giving us the strength, courage, and patience to unconditionally, sacrificially show the world that God is love. Amen.