



Erie Week 2 | Boulder Week 3: **LOVE**

We love tacos. We love our team. We love God. *Love* is a word that gets thrown around a lot, but we are going to limit our gaze to how it intersects with Advent. The coming of Jesus—past and future, remembered and expected—is all about love. If you're in Erie, this falls in week 2 of our Advent series. If you're in Boulder, it's week 3.

Connect

1. What words or ideas come to mind when you think of the word, *love*?
2. What has your experience of love been like this past year?
3. What did you find most significant from last Sunday's sermon?

Understand

1. Read John 3:1-21. Who is Nicodemus, and why do you suppose John points out that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night rather than during the day?
2. Read Numbers 21:4-9. Jesus cites this bizarre incident from Israel's past in verses 14-15 of John 3.¹ How does this event from the wilderness relate to what Jesus says must happen "that whoever believes in him may have eternal life"?
3. Consider the well-known words of John 3:16. How is the love of God displayed both through what happened in the wilderness with the bronze serpent and, especially, with Jesus?
4. God so loved the world. How do you think that message would have been heard by people who were subject to Roman occupation?
5. Jesus' first advent (coming) culminated in being lifted up by crucifixion. How will His second advent be different?²

Apply

1. What messages does our culture tell us about what love is and how do these messages compare with what this passage says about the kind of love God has for us?

2. “Perish” and “condemned” are things we like to avoid thinking about (especially at Christmas!), yet they are essential to understanding how “God so loved the world.” How does a venomous snakebite—also an unpleasant image—depict our situation?

3. Let’s face it, this time of year can be packed full of demands, expectations, nostalgia, marketing, celebrating, etc., etc. What can we do as a community of God’s people to focus on how Advent, above all, is God’s love displayed through Jesus?

4. The scope of God’s love through Christ extends as well to those we find difficult to love. Without naming names, who are these people, and what can you do to begin loving the “unlovable”?

Notes:

1. The reference to “Son of Man”—a title Jesus uses often to refer to Himself—is also a fascinating connection to Israel’s past out of Daniel 7. In all, Jesus is combining familiar references from Israel’s Scriptures to express His mission or purpose.

2. Some translations include a footnote on verse 14 indicating how the verb “lifted up” can also mean “exalted.”