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The Second Coming of Christ:

“Loving Others while Waiting for His Return”

1 Thessalonians 3:11–13

Pastor Gary Hamrick



How much do you love people who don't know Jesus? Because Jesus is coming again, our hearts should break for people who are not ready. In the closing verses of 1 Thessalonians 3, Paul prayed that our love would “increase” and “abound” for one another and for all as we wait for the second coming of Christ. Follow along as Pastor Gary explains four practical ways to demonstrate God's love to others.

1. The second coming
 - a. The second coming in 1 Thessalonians
 - i. Chapter 1
 1. We are delivered from God's wrath.
 - ii. Chapter 2
 1. We have reasons to rejoice about Christ's second coming.
 - iii. Chapter 3
 1. Love others while waiting for His return.
 - iv. Chapter 4
 1. Be ready for the rapture.
 - v. Chapter 5
 1. Experience spirit, soul, and body transformation in Christ.
 - b. Belief in the second coming
 - i. The Bible preaches the second coming.
 1. Jesus spoke about it in all four Gospels.
 2. Peter and Paul spoke about it in their epistles.
 3. John wrote about it in Revelation.
 - ii. The early church fathers spoke and wrote of Jesus' second coming.
 - iii. A slight majority of American adults believe in the second coming.
 - c. The two phases of the second coming
 - i. In the first phase, Jesus will come in the air for His church. This is the rapture.
 - ii. In the second phase, Jesus will return to earth with the church after the tribulation. We will then reign with Him for 1,000 years.
2. **1 Thessalonians 3:11–13** – “[11] Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. [12] And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, [13] so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

3. Defining love

- a. Over 100 million songs, several million poems, and 10s of millions of novels have been written about love.
- b. The worldly definition of love falls short of Biblical love.
 - i. The world views love as romantic and sexual.
- c. The Bible models love for others after God's love for us.
 - i. Paul prayed the church would *"increase and abound in love"* (verse 12).
 1. Paul wanted Believers to grow (or *"increase"*) and overflow (*"abound"*) in love. To love a little is not to love at all.
 2. **DISCUSS:** How has Christ increased your love for others? What things hinder God's love from overflowing in your life (**Matthew 24:12**)?
 - ii. Paul said, *"May the Lord make you . . . love"* (verse 12).
 1. God is the source of love, and He is not stingy.
 2. **Romans 5:5** – *"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*
 3. **Jeremiah 31:3** – *"The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.'"*
 4. **John 3:16** – *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*

4. Called to love

- a. Believers should follow Christ's example and show love *"to one another and to all"* (**1 Thessalonians 3:12**).
 - i. To love *"one another"* means to love other Christians.
 - ii. To love *"all"* means our love should extend to the lost.
- b. Love the saved.
 - i. Paul prayed that God would make the church *"increase and abound in love to one another"* (**1 Thessalonians 3:12**).
 - ii. God calls us to love His church.
 1. **1 John 4:20** – *"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother [or sister in the Lord], he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"*
 2. All through Scripture, we're called to encourage, help, and comfort one another, especially as culture degenerates.

3. God calls us to love other Christians despite our different backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures.
- iii. Paul gave himself as an example of loving the church.
 1. **1 Thessalonians 3:12b** – “Love . . . just as we do to you.”
- iv. Our love for the family of God is a witness to the lost.
 1. **John 13:35** – “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 2. **DISCUSS**: Are you known for your love for God’s people? What is one way you can love the family of God?
- c. Love the lost.
 - i. Paul prayed that God would make the church “*increase and abound in love . . . to all.*”
 1. Love cares about whether others are ready for Jesus’ second coming.
 2. **Hebrews 9:28** – “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”
 - a. Jesus already came to die for us.
 - b. In His second coming, He will return in judgment.
 3. **DISCUSS**: How does knowing what Christ’s return means for non-believers motivate you to love the lost by sharing the Gospel with them?
- d. Christians will face worldly opposition.
 - i. Christians will face animosity in this world, but it is not truly against us. It is Satan hating to see Christ in us.
 1. This increasing hostility is why we need each other.
 2. **DISCUSS**: How has God used His people to encourage you? How are you being an encouragement to other Believers?
- e. Love others like God loves you.
 - i. The Greeks had various words for love:
 1. **Storge** referred to familial love.
 2. **Eros** referred to sexual, romantic love.
 - a. **Eros** is where we get the word “erotic.”
 3. **Philia** referred to brotherly love or friendship.
 - a. Philadelphia means “city of brotherly love.”
 4. **Agape** referred to the highest love.
 - a. The word **agape**, or its verb form **agapao**, is used over 260 times in the Bible.
 - b. It is the most common Greek word for love used in our Bibles.
 - ii. The “love” God calls us to in **1 Thessalonians 3:12** is **agape** love.

1. God is the source of the highest form of love, and we must know Him to be able to express it.
 2. **DISCUSS:** How has abiding in the Lord empowered you to love others as He loves you?
5. How to demonstrate God's love
- a. Say it.
 - i. We should be willing to tell those close to us that we love them.
 - ii. God sets the example by speaking of His love for us throughout Scripture.
 1. **John 13:34b** – *"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."* (1984 NIV)
 2. **John 15:9a** – *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you."* (1984 NIV)
 3. **Jeremiah 31:3b** – *"I have loved you with an everlasting love."*
 - iii. People can convert from witnessing our love for one another, like the Jewish tour guide in Pastor Gary's Israel trips.
 1. **1 Peter 1:22** – *"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."* (1984 NIV)
 2. **DISCUSS:** Is your love for others evident? Do you verbalize it?
 - b. Serve.
 - i. Don't just proclaim your love—show it.
 1. **1 John 3:18** – *"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."* (1984 NIV)
 2. **Galatians 5:13b** – *"Serve one another in love."* (1984 NIV)
 3. **DISCUSS:** Do you look for ways to serve people? How is God teaching you to stop asking the question, "What about me?"
 - ii. Consider others' needs above your own.
 1. **Philippians 2:3–4** – *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* (1984 NIV)
 2. It is not that our needs are not important, but that we should be others-oriented rather than self-centered.
 3. **Matthew 20:28** – *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*
 4. When we serve, we love like Jesus.
 5. **DISCUSS:** How can you incorporate service into your daily routine? How does knowing God's heart toward you empower you to serve others?

c. Sacrifice.

i. Sometimes loving others hurts.

1. Love requires various sacrifices, including the sacrifice of forgiveness and of letting go.
2. Love does not hold on to our rights and grudges because we want to extend grace.

ii. Jesus' love involved great sacrifice.

1. **1 John 3:16** – *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."* (1984 NIV)
2. **DISCUSS:** How does Jesus' sacrifice of love shape your view of yourself and others? How does that affect your treatment of people, even people who do not reciprocate that love?

d. Share.

- i. **Hebrews 13:16** – *"Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."* (1984 NIV)
 1. In context, the author was speaking of sacrifices to meet others' material needs.
 2. However, we can do that and go beyond, helping meet others' spiritual needs by sharing the Gospel with them.
 3. **DISCUSS:** How do you incorporate the good news of the Gospel into regular conversation?

6. David Livingstone

a. His life

- i. Livingstone left Great Britain to be a medical missionary to Africa in the 1800s.
- ii. He traveled over 29,000 miles on foot sharing the Gospel in the interior of Africa.
- iii. In 1873, he died of malaria and dysentery in a remote village which today would be in Zambia.

b. His death

- i. Livingstone's friends found him dead in a kneeling position as if he'd been praying before he died.
- ii. The villagers carried Livingstone's body over 1,000 miles to the coast so it could be sailed to Britain, where it would be buried.
- iii. By Livingstone's request, the villagers cut out his heart and buried it under a tree. Livingstone had said that Africa was where his heart would always be.

- iv. **DISCUSS:** Where is your heart? Are you submitting to your God-given calling to reach out to the lost world around you? Who is God calling you to reach?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)