



Links Players

Advent Fridays, 2022 - Love

...hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5: 5, ESV)

Do you remember the first time you played golf? Can you recall the first moment you fell in love with this game? What was it about this sport that grabbed your soul? Was it the challenge of making pars? Birdies? Was it the comradery? Was it that this game is played in the great outdoors? Was it the competition?

First loves! First love(s) can provide powerful memories and strong emotions. Going off to college and discovering that field of study that will shape you for the rest of your life can be an extraordinary experience. Traveling abroad and discovering a different culture for the first time often leaves a deep impression on our lives. We often long to return.

There are many "first loves!" As great as they were, none are in the same league as when we first encountered Jesus. We will rack our brains for all eternity and never exhaustively explain such amazing love.

The night Jesus was betrayed, he went to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. While there, he saw the agony that awaited him at Calvary. Yet, he responded to the Father with, "...not as I will, but as you will." The love of Jesus for the Father's will and the redemption of his bride motivated Jesus to give his life as a ransom for many.

While hanging on a gibbet, Rome's instrument of torture, shame, and death, Jesus was mocked, pierced, and crucified. Many cried, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself." It was love that kept him there. Love for the Father and the church would cause Jesus to refuse that option.

After his resurrection and ascension, Jesus, in love, sent the Holy Spirit to "pour out" the love of God in Christ into our hearts. Our first encounter with the love of Christ was overwhelming. It transformed us at the root! The way we thought, the way we felt, and the way we interacted with others was overhauled in a moment.

When Paul says, "the love of Christ controls me," he is saying what we all hope to say about our lives in ever-deepening ways as we grow in grace. He says that Christ's love for him motivates and governs his life.

May we, this Christmas, discover more and more the deep love of Jesus for us. In doing so, may we return that love in worship to the Three-In-One and give witness to those not yet living in the light of his love.

Prayer: Jesus, pour more and more of your love into our hearts!

READING - Romans 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; John 15:9-13.

OPENING QUESTIONS: When did you fall in love with this game?

1. In **John 15: 9-13**, Jesus has much to say about love. The most startling is that he loves us as much as the Father loves him. Ponder and discuss. What else do we learn about love in this passage?

2. In **Romans 5:5**, Paul explains how the love displayed by Jesus at the cross is experienced by us two thousand years later. It's one thing to see love displayed at Calvary and quite another to experience it. Discuss the Holy Spirit's impact on your life.

3. In **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**, Paul elaborates on Jesus' death on the cross for us and how it governs our lives. Discuss the difficulties of no longer living for self. Would knowing more of his love deliver us from selfishness?
