



# Links Players

## Advent Fridays, 2023 - God is Love

*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. 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:9-11, ESV)*

I have been smitten with golf ever since Dad bought my first set of irons to go with some hand-me-down-sawed-off-woods. I was ten years old. Through all the ebb and flow, ups and downs, good and bad, this game has had a profoundly deep hold on my life.

Sadly, far too many times, golf held a greater sway in my life than it should. Through six decades of playing this game, bad decisions, irresponsible behaviors, and neglected duties were mostly due to teeing it up when I should have been involved in something infinitely more important. Yep, misdirected love is a dangerous thing.

Love the right things in the right order, and you have the template for a life well-lived. Misdirect your loves, and it's only a matter of time before reality strikes. Love the right things in the wrong order; that imbalance will also wreak disaster.

This reality begs a serious question—where can we find the authoritative list outlining the proper objects and the right sequence of our love? The shortlist is this: 1) Love for God, 2) Love for others, and 3) Love of self (properly understood).

If you recognize these three, I am riffing on the first and second commandments outlined in Jesus' answer to a lawyer's question about qualifying for entrance into heaven.

But this creates a serious problem. The problem is this—we lack the ability to obey! Yep! We are "caught between a [eternal] rock and a hard place."

This inability to obey has perplexed more than a few people. They ask, "How can God command us to do something we are incapable of obeying?"

John Bunyan captured our plight best when he pithily observed, "Run, John, run, the law commands, but gives you neither feet nor hands. Better news the gospel brings: it bids you fly and gives you wings."

What the law demands, the gospel empowers us to keep. That's why the love of God was manifest in the sending of his Son that "we might live" and that this Son would be a "propitiation for our sins."

To those who were "dead in trespasses and sin," this "Son gave life." That is, through the power of the Spirit, we can love God and others. To those chasing after idols, the Father in love sent the Son of his love to propitiate (i.e., assuage, satisfy justice) the wrath of God for our idolatry.

We often hear, "Love is love." That is as silly as it is misleading. Love properly defined is this—"God is love!" And that love was manifest two thousand years ago when the Father sent the Son to raise the "sons of earth" through the power of the Spirit, enabling us to love God, others, and, yes, even golf.

**Prayer: Lord, empower and direct our deepest affections toward you and all your many gifts in their proper order.**

### READING: 1 John 4:7-21

1. In what ways has a misdirected love for this game created disorder in your family or vocational life?

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2. After reading 1 John 4: 7-21, break out the many ways John talks about the "love of God."

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3. In light of today's devotional and text, how would you measure—on a scale of 1-10, 10 being strong love—your love for God, others, other things, and golf?

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