

Lenten Midweek 1 – 2026

The Crucifixion of Christ in the Life of Man

(The Crucifixion of Christ and the Essence of Love)

1 John 4:7-21

John 13:1-11

God knows more than we do. I don't say that to be flip or to insult you with the obvious. I say it to draw you into His advantage. We live linearly. We think linearly. We live moment by moment and yesterday has led into today. Hopefully, what we learned yesterday we incorporate into today's actions. The Bible amplifies this with a simple yet relatable section of Scripture: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Corinthians 13:11).

God knows more than we do. He sees more than we do. He governs, He plans, He builds, He weaves His purposes into the world and your life in a way that you don't always expect, in a way that you don't always see. One of the domains where this reality is important to keep in mind is time. God stands outside of time. God is the author of time. He is time's Master, not its servant. Our Triune God is both omniscient and timeless. You are neither of those things. Man, humanity, was, however, created in God's image. Holy; that was part of being created in God's image. We possess a soul. We are capable of self-reflection. We are gifted with the awareness of beauty and truth. These wondrous gifts stem from a giving God, stem from a God who gives what is His. To be made in His image also includes our ability to love.

To love God above all things and to love one's neighbor as oneself – that sounds heavenly, doesn't it? Love was very much alive in paradise. Did God have a crucified Savior in mind when He created Adam? Did God know, did God plan, did God anticipate and treasure and intentionally design Adam and Eve as He did because He knew that Jesus would be the church's bridegroom and the church would be Christ's bride? In other words, did something that happened later in time determine what God would do at the beginning of time? God creates man because He wanted to give, not take. Do you agree? He gives life. What a gift! What is beneath the gift? What is the prompt to give life? Love is the genesis of Genesis. Love is the divine prompt for man's creation from the dust of the earth. Love is the catalyst for Eve's creation from man's rib. Our gender means something. Our gender means something because God created it to mean something.

God is love (1 John 4:8). That is a direct quote from Scripture. But it's more than a quote, it's a hermeneutic, it's a principle of biblical interpretation AND it's a principle by which you are to interpret life and love. Self-giving; God creates man in His image as an act of love, as an act of self-giving. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:10). Love is a dynamic that is anchored in a crucified Savior. That reality stands outside of time. Love is a divine reality that God has caused to live in you. We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). So, is it a joy to you? To be loved and to love, is it a joy to you? Do you feel as though you are more as you participate in a love that is divinely born, divinely given? Are you humbled yet confident as love enlarges your heart? Are you both content in soul and eager, restless even, to serve as God's love has its way with you?

Most of you have come to realize that love is multifaceted. Our Lord's crucifixion is like a diamond. Here's the analogy: When a young lass is proposed to it is a fabulous day for her. The young lad has captured her heart and pledged his fidelity and spoken to her tenderly about her value and his good fortune to find her. He gives her a ring. Emotions soar. Plans are dreamed. A kiss. An embrace. The day ends and they part. And then the young lass is alone with her thoughts. The rush of the proposal is fresh in her mind, but she is by herself, rehearsing the day's events, *and she looks at her ring*. She remembers his words and she looks at her ring. She looks into her future, and she looks at her ring – first this way, then that way, and then she takes in its beauty and its meaning from still another vantage point. Christ on the cross is that diamond. It is multifaceted, its meaning can't be exhausted, and we grow more beautiful in spirit as we look at His cross from lots of different angles.

God loved the world in this way, that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life (John 3:16). God's love is multifaceted. God's love is maternal and paternal. God's love is marital (just read the Song of Solomon), and it is friendly. God's love is sacrificial, it's protective, and it's zealous. God's love is strong and gentle. It's purposeful and it's free. Christ's crucifixion is the love of God that invades everything that you have ever known as true love. Jesus' crucifixion is theologically *prior* to God creating Adam from the dust of the earth and the very reason that God created Adam from the dust of the earth. To discover God's grace is to discover the origin and the meaning of love. To see our Lord giving Himself into death to save you is to understand how love is unleashed in this world. The only reason that you know love, have experienced love, is because God created you to know it because He wants you to understand what the crucifixion truly is.

Sin is not only a betrayal of a commandment, not only a violation of God's will and an act of self-harm, but it is also a betrayal of love. That's sad, isn't it? That hurts, doesn't it? There's a reason that adultery fractures marriage. Adultery is a betrayal. The Bible calls us sinners "spiritual adulterers." "You adulterous people! Don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity toward God?" (James 4:4). The law convicts us. Properly, the law convicts us. Pride and lust and greed and deceit – its all adultery, all a betrayal of love, God's love. We choose ourselves over Him. That hurts, doesn't it? It's supposed to hurt. The law convicting us of our sin is our Father creating in us a penitent heart, it is a scorned lover calling us back to His hearth and home and the sanctity of the marital union. His love is in your penitent heart. Will you repent or will you blithely tell yourself that this religion stuff is for suckers, for the weak and the docile and the hyper-emotional? The one who refuses to repent diminishes himself. The one who refuses to repent diminishes love. The one who refuses to repent is engaging in a very dangerous act of self-harm.

St. John tells us that on the night in which our Lord was betrayed that those whom He loved He loved to the uttermost, He loved to the full extent of His love (John 13:2). John's remark could have more than one referent. John then tells how Jesus washed His disciples' feet, an act of humility and service. Isn't it baptismal? Peter isn't game for the washing. Jesus tells Peter that unless Peter allows the Lord to render this service to him that Peter would have "no share with me" (John 13:8). Receive Christ's service, receive His love as He chooses to give it or risk not having it at all. We didn't choose the cross. We didn't construct it, didn't approve it, didn't have any input whatsoever. We didn't construct baptism. It has been given to us. We didn't dream up

the Lord's Supper. These acts of love are an extension of the cross, an extension of that once-for-all saving event which comes to you *in time*. Like the diamond that the young lass looks at from various angles, the crucifixion of our Lord has endless dimensions. St. John's statement that Jesus showed them the full extent of His love is a segue to His crucifixion. There, in a dying Messiah, is God's eternal love. Poured out for you, Jesus gives and gives and gives. That love predates Adam's creation. That love will be there when you die. That love gives shape and contour to your life. You have known that love and you will go on knowing it because God has willed to give it to you in rich supply. That is His way. That is the reason you are a Christian.