

12-24-23 (Fourth Sunday in Advent) (Morning)

Sermon- For Unto Us, Love is Born

Scripture- Isaiah 9:1-7, CTW 161 hymnal

Hymns- 191, 192, 180

Theme- The story of Jesus and God's plan for us cannot be understood until we see the prophesy of Christ that came true in the New Testament, was foretold in the Old Testament. All of this stems from the fact that "God so loved the World!"

I. Searching for the "Real" Meaning of Christmas

A. Does Hallmark have the Answer? My wife Dani loves Hallmark Channel movies, as do a lot of you. I tease her because although they are enjoyable, there is nothing new about any of their movies- you can see every plot development coming a mile away.

Especially the Christmas ones- a guy and girl meet, they dislike each other first, then they fall for each other, they have some crisis/argument, they reconcile in time for Christmas. Pretty much every Hallmark movie in a nutshell...sound familiar?

One thing I noticed is almost all of the Christmas movies claim to be about someone learning "the true meaning of Christmas" and not one of them is actually about it.

B. The world's idea of the "true meaning of Christmas" is to be nice to other people. It's not a bad message, it's just not the meaning of Christmas, it's not even close.

But the idea of being nice is all the world has to offer. Be nice, help others, it's a great sentiment- but that is not the message of Christmas. As good as the message to treat others well is, God offers something so much more.

Our passage for today contains these words:

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7

II. This is the meaning of Christmas. God saw man's need for a savior from the beginning of the world, in fact, even before the beginning of the world.

Ephesians 1:4 states, ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love.

Before the world was created, God foreknew the failure of Adam and Eve and made plans for sending His son to save all who would believe in Him.

A. The question is why would God do that? The answer is simple and is the theme for this fourth week in Advent-love.

Remember **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

This verse is so familiar, if we are not careful, we can miss its significance. He gave His son because He loves us that much. He was willing to pour out His justice on His innocent son.

It sounds almost cruel- punishing His innocent offspring for our sins. Imagine a neighbor kid breaks a window so you punish your child or grandchild for what the neighbor did. That seems strange, even unfair.

B. Why would God punish Christ for what we are and what we do? Because the Father and Son agreed that the son would come to earth and perfectly fulfill the law and righteousness of God. In essence, He would be just and perfect for us who have broken God's law.

The death sentence of the cross was our sentence, the death penalty the prescription for our sins. But Jesus came, was born in that stable on Christmas morning and grew up to die for our sins, and rise from the grave, forever defeating sin, death, and Hell.

Romans 5:8 says: "God demonstrated His love in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

III. God did not wait for us to have something to offer. He loved us when we had nothing to give. He loved us, not because of who we are, but because of **who He is**.

A. God is love. He doesn't just love, He is love. God has showed his love in this amazing fashion by His willingness to submit to giving up the life of His son for the benefit of others. While we were yet sinners, and of course His enemies, God elected to show us mercy because who He is. In this, God's love surpasses any profession of love ever made by any man ever. God's love made the ultimate sacrifice for you and I.

Sometimes we forget, the Bible says that before we came to Christ, we were enemies of God. That is the classification of mankind apart from Christ, according to the Word of God- they are enemies of God.

It doesn't say we were poor babes lost in the woods; it says we were enemies of God before we came to Christ? Why? Sin separates us from a holy God. It creates a chasm between us, and God and that chasm can only be bridged by the cross of Jesus Christ.

Christ died for us while we were enemies. Think about that. Would you die to save a Middle-Eastern terrorist? Would you be willing to give up your life to save one of them? Think I am being too extreme, Look at what is happening in Gaza right now!

B. God says we were once enemies and alienated from Him. The analogy is a fair comparison to make. Christ died for us, when we were on the opposing side; that's how much and how deeply God loves.

He sent His own son to earth, knowing He would be beaten and killed. Why? Because He loved us that much. Now we have a high priest, a savior who is our Counselor- A counselor is someone who gives direction.

He guides people who do not know what to do. Jesus has told us all we need to do to be friends with God.

Listen to **John 5:22-24**: ²²Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ²⁴"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

All we need do to pass from death to life, from condemnation to acceptance is to believe on the **finished work of Christ**. We like to use the phrase "accept Christ" but the truth is, we are the ones who need to be accepted and we become accepted by God when we believe and become His dear children.

John 1:12 says: ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

C. He is not just the Messiah, He is the "Mighty God."

Jesus said of Himself in **Revelation 1:8 & 18:** ⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and of Hell."

Jesus, our savior, is greater than any other religious figure. He is not merely a prophet like Moses and Elijah. He is almighty God, the one who holds the keys of Hell and death!

This means He is sovereign over that which has terrified mankind for centuries- death itself! This is why the scripture says, "Where O death is thy victory? Where O Death is Thy Sting?" That is a rhetorical question.

Paul is saying in that statement from **1 Corinthians 15:55:** "Death you have no sting, you have no power, for the Lord Jesus has destroyed you!"

IV. The babe in the manger did not stay a baby, He is the sovereign Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the promised one!

A. He is our Prince of Peace- It is not the world's idea of peace. He came to bring the peace that comes from knowing God as savior. It is a peace that assures us of eternal life and a purpose here on earth because we belong to God.

It is a peace that can be present in the most dire of circumstances and therefore is a peace that cannot be taken away. The "peace on earth" that the angel declares in Luke is not the world's idea of world peace but the peace that passes understanding when we trust in Christ.

It is the peace that means no matter what happens, we belong to Jesus and no one can snatch us out of His hand.

B. And...It is the great love the Father has bestowed on us that enables us to become children of God. It is the love of God that sent His Son to be born in a lowly manger, to live to die. He lived to die for us!

Love is this Advent Sunday's theme. It was so great a love that God the Son left His glory in heaven, to become like one of us, to save all of us who would believe.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Christmas is not just the manger scene; it is the whole story from birth to death to glorious resurrection.

C. Christmas is the story of God's love-gift to mankind. That is Christ Himself, the present that continues to give to everyone who calls on His name. He is alive and well and is near to all who call on Him and trust in Him.

How great the Father's love that He sent His only begotten son, so that we could become His children too. That's love worth celebrating, not just at Christmas, but the whole year through.

Amen? Pray...