

**“THE NEED FOR LOVE”****Pastor Mike Corwin****2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ADVENT****TEXT: JOHN 3:16-17****SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:26-35****I – GIFTS OF LOVE:**

It's that time of the year again...time to shop for Christmas gifts. Starting on black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, people go into a feeding frenzy to get the gifts they need for family and friends. Some get it over with before Thanksgiving, some shortly after, while others are still scrambling around looking for things on Christmas Eve.

A comic I saw a few years ago in the paper got me to thinking about why we give gifts. It's the "FAMILY CIRCUS" comic and Grandmother is telling her children a piece of wisdom. She says "You can give without loving, but you can't love unless you give." I don't know about you, but the number one reason I give gifts at this time of year is LOVE. I get gifts for my wife, my children, and my grandchildren because I love them, not because I have to. I give gifts to others too because I feel obligated for some reason, but I give gifts to my family out of the motivation of love.

I've noticed too that the motivation for the gift determines the way I shop and what kind of gift I buy. When I'm shopping for my secretaries or just an acquaintance I can walk through a store and settle on something because "It's nice" and I hope they'll like it. When I'm shopping for my loved ones the criteria is different. I shop a lot longer; I put some time and effort into the gift selection. I want to give them something they'll cherish, something that serves some purpose in their life or fills a need, a gift that they want, a gift that I know they'll use. I want them to open the gift on Christmas morning and have it Shout out to them "I LOVE YOU" on my behalf. I want to get them a gift that comes from my heart.

**II – GOD'S GIFT OF LOVE:**

If you can look at this comic and understand the difference between giving out of obligation or just to give and giving because you love someone, then you move deeper in your understanding of God. It allows you to understand better the nature of God. It moves you

closer to fully understanding the true story of Christmas and the first gift of Christmas, a baby in a manger.

The Christmas story begins in the Garden of Eden where God placed the first humans, made in God's image and perfect. That perfection was soon ruined as we ushered evil and sin into the world by our disobedience. It continues into the lands outside the garden, into Egypt, into the desert, into the Promised Land. All along the way God tried to guide the people, give them directions to live by, tried to love them in the hopes they would love him back, and all along the way the people refused to accept the love or give it back, they were continually disobedient. It didn't matter what the gift was he blessed them with, whether it was good crops, good kings, good land, or delivering them from their enemies, it made no difference. Generation after generation they turned away from God and towards sin.

Then one day an angel appeared to a teenage girl named Mary, telling her she had been chosen by God to be the bearer of the greatest gift of love ever given to the world. She would be the gift wrapping for a baby, not an ordinary baby, but the very Child of God. The baby would be conceived in a divine way by God's Holy Spirit and would be holy, and when he was born she would name him Jesus. This baby would be the Savior of the world. This baby would reign over God's people for ever and ever. Mary was frightened as the angel appeared and told her everything that was going to happen, but as the story unfolded she realized this was a blessing not only to her, but to the entire world and told the angel she would bear God's gift of love.

### **III – TEXT – JOHN 3:16-17:**

This morning's text is short, it's only two lines long, but the entire Gospel is summed up in those two lines. In those two lines we see the message of love that God has for us, in those two lines we see the thoughtfulness behind the first Christmas gift, and in those two lines we see the intensity of pure love.

### **John 3:16 - 17 (NLT)**

<sup>16</sup> “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

The motivation for God's gift to humanity is love. It's not hate, it's not like he threw his hands in the air in frustration, it's not like he sent a sign that enough was enough. He sent love and he sent it out of love. God loved the world “SO MUCH” that he sent the gift.

And what was the gift – the most precious thing he had to give. The most cherished commodity in heaven, his one and only Son, Jesus. He knew what was going to happen to Jesus before he sent him, he knew the hardships he would face, he knew the suffering he would go through, and yet he sent him anyway.

This text also points out the “WHY” of the gift. It tells us the purpose and the thought behind the gift of the Christ child. God sent his Son because it was a gift we needed. We were all sinners and on a path to eternal banishment and punishment, but God loved us so much he wanted to give us a way out. That’s what someone does when they love you, they try to save you from trouble, try to protect you from your self. That’s what God did. Through his love he sent a way out. A gift that could save us from ourselves. And it is a gift – we do nothing to earn it, it is given freely, all we have to do is believe!

We now have options. We can either go on with our sinful ways and follow our own paths and perish, or we can believe in Jesus, live the way he taught us to live, and have eternal life. Heaven or hell, the choice is ours. That’s another sign of love isn’t it? If someone loves you they don’t force themselves on you or make you do anything, they just love you and hope you love them back. That’s what God has done with this gift of love. He has given it to everyone but it’s up to each person to open it and use it.

God made it clear in verse 17 that he wishes everyone to open the gift and embrace his Son as their Lord and Savior. He didn’t send Jesus to condemn us for what we do, he sent Jesus to save us from what we do. His wish is that everyone would embrace his love.

God’s attitude towards us is positive, not negative. He’s not looking for an excuse to destroy us, he’s trying to preserve us.

#### **IV – THE NEED FOR LOVE:**

The birth of Jesus was the most thoughtful gift our loving God could give us. Jesus filled the need to redeem us from our sins, to usher us into the Kingdom of God.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, God looked down on the earth, his creation, and was dismayed by what he saw. The people were fighting and killing one another in wars. There was child abuse with some people even burning their children in fire as sacrifices to the gods of the culture. There was spousal abuse as women were treated only as property to be used and disposed of as people saw fit. The rich did everything in their power to get richer and in doing so enslaved other people to do their bidding, they cheated and oppressed the widows and the lower classes of people. The governments of the day only scratched the back of those who could scratch back – there was no mercy or justice for the people. Poverty was everywhere you

looked with people going to bed hungry or dying in the streets of starvation. Only the rich could afford medical care as it was then. Sin was everywhere you looked as prostitutes, both male and female, bid you from doorways of homes and idol temples, and adultery was accepted by many. Gambling was a pastime for some, and drugs and alcohol had already entered into the lives of society and were abused by some. The only answer God had for such conditions was love and he sent Jesus to give it to his children. A way out of their sin, their conditions of life.

As God looks down from heaven today he sees the same conditions still prevail. The need for love is just as great today as it was over 2,000 years ago. The answer to our problems is the same too...Jesus. The only gift that has ever been given that saves us is the birth of God's Son, Jesus the Christ. He is the greatest gift and the greatest love.

### **V – JESUS FILLS THE NEED:**

Starting today, I encourage you to all think about the sacrifice made for you. To think about how instead of wrath for our actions, God sent love.

That's what happened the first Christmas, love truly did come down at Christmas time. God's love became human and lived among us, leaving us teachings and examples of that love. He gave us the example of how great that love was when he went humbly to his execution on a Roman Cross so you and I could have the option to live or perish, to embrace love or turn away from it. The cross of Jesus is the exhibition of the heart of God. It's God with his arms outstretched so he can embrace everyone who is driven into them.

We know from the Bible that we are intimately loved by God before we're ever loved by our parents or spouses, or by our children or anyone else. God formed us in the dark of the womb and loved us before anyone else ever held us or set eyes upon us. We all have a deep desire to be loved and the only thing that fills that need in the deepest reaches of our beings is a relationship to Jesus the Christ. Have you allowed God to love you?

AMEN

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