

“Christmas Love”

John 3:16; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-18

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Today, we lit the fourth candle on the advent wreath, the candle of love. This leads to a question I want to ask and answer this morning. What is Christmas love? No one questions that love and Christmas go together. Always have and always will. What does this mean, though? What exactly is Christmas love?

I believe it is three things. It is a desire to give as well as receive, to build up not tear down and to do what is right not what is easy. Let me explain by referring to pertinent parts of the Christmas story.

First of all, Christmas love is a desire to give as well as receive. In my opinion, John 3:16 is as much a part of the Christmas story as the verses in Luke and Matthew. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Christmas love begins with giving. It did with God and it should with us.

Paul received a new car from his brother as a Christmas present. One day as he was walking to this car after work, he noticed a young boy admiring it. “Is this your car, mister?” “Yes,” Paul nodded. “It was a Christmas present from my brother.” The boy looked astonished and said, “You mean your brother gave you this car and it didn’t cost you nothing?” “That’s right,” Paul replied. Then the young boy said, “Gosh, I wish…” He hesitated and Paul knew what he was going to wish. He was going to wish that he had a brother like that. However, the boy looked at Paul and shocked him when he finished his sentence, **“I wish that I could be a brother like that!”**

Paul was so taken with this boy’s generous spirit that he offered to take him for a ride. The young boy asked Paul to drive by his house. Paul felt like he knew why the boy requested this. He wanted to show his neighbors that he could ride home in a new sports car. Paul was wrong again, though. As soon as he got to the boy’s home, this young lad jumped out of the car and asked Paul to wait.

A few minutes later, Paul saw this little boy carrying his younger brother. He sat him on the curb in front of the car and said, “There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas. It didn’t cost him a cent. Someday, I’m going to give you one just like it and then you can see all the things in the Christmas windows that I have been trying to tell you about.”

I am not sure many children I know are this thoughtful and generous. I know I wasn’t when I was a child. However, this statement, “I wish I could be a brother like that,” reflects the spirit of Christmas love as few others. It needs to be on our lips a lot more and guide our decisions.

Secondly, Christmas love is the desire to build up not tear down. After Herod heard of the birth of the Christ child, what did he do? He issued a decree that all male children two and under should be killed. Fear and jealousy brought out the worst in him.

Contrast this with the words and actions of Jesus. In John 10:10, he said, “I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” As a result, he went about doing good, teaching, healing and helping. He spent his life turning chaos into order, bad into good and fear into security. What a difference he made and is still making.

You can make a difference in people's lives, too. Be sensitive to those who are struggling with low self-esteem, guilt, loneliness or poor health. Reach out to them. Encourage them. Lift them up for this is the very purpose of Christmas love.

Thirdly, Christmas love is the desire to do what is right even if it is not easy. Without a doubt, one of the unsung heroes of the Christmas story is Joseph. I believe he was as carefully chosen by God as Mary. What made Joseph a hero? The way he treated Mary and handled this sensitive situation made him special. As you know, he did not divorce her or have her stoned, but took her home as his wife and took care of her.

Why did he do this? Matthew said it was because he was a righteous man. He was more concerned with doing what was right than what was easy. And what was right in this situation was not to flex his spiritual muscles and reveal his zeal for the law or protect his own image in a small community, but to take care of a scared and vulnerable girl. This he did and we all owe him a debt of gratitude.

This is what Christmas love is. It is thinking of others more than you. It is being compassionate and merciful when the world says you need to be legalistic and strict. It is sharing another's pain when it would be easier to deflect it. It is helping someone solve a problem that you have not created. It is keeping quiet when the paparazzi is asking for gossipy details. It is being gentle when the world says you need to be harsh. This is Christmas love at its best.

In the '60's, Hal David wrote the lyrics to a song titled, "What the World Needs Now." What did he say that it needed? Love, sweet love. If you recall, he said we don't need another mountain, ocean or river. We don't even need more meadows, sunbeams or moonbeams. "What the world needs now is love, sweet love. It's the only thing there is far too little of."

The need is still here, isn't it? So, let's do our part to provide more of it this Christmas and beyond.